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Poets on Christmas

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THE POETS

ON

Christmas

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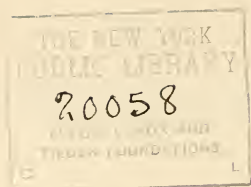
WILLIAM KNIGHT

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SOME say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long ;
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad ;
The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.¹

SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM (1564-1616).

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¹ *Hamlet*, I. i. 159.

PREFACE

"NOËLS, noëls, noëls!" The following is a collection of Odes, Songs, Lyrics, Hymns, and Sonnets on Christmas, gathered from various sources but embodying a common aim or tendency. It is a memorial of the thoughts of diverse minds and the feelings of many hearts as to that gracious time which Christendom commemorates with a homage ever old yet always new. For the material made use of it has been necessary to go a good way back among the writers of the Anglo-Saxon race; but only a portion of what exists has been selected and placed within the volume. The aim of the compiler has been to bring together the best products of the genius of England and America on the subject.

Unquestionably the finest Christmas poem which the world possesses is Milton's magnificent Ode, *On the Morning of the Nativity*, written (it is thought) when he was a Cambridge undergraduate; but many of the early English noëls have the dew of our nation's literary youth upon them. Selections from these are given; but those which are quite archaic, both in form and substance, are excluded from the volume. The book is not issued for scholars, but for the unlearned; and not for social use, but for private perusal. Many poems, however, which could not be utilized as hymns in worship may be welcomed by the lovers both of old English and of modern verse.

The editor does not consider all the fragments he

has brought together of equal literary value ; neither does he presume to think that all the poems which are dear to the universal heart of Christendom have been included. Neither completeness nor finality is possible in any such collection ; but it is hoped that this one is fairly cosmopolitan, and representative of many schools of thought within the Christian Church.

In arranging the poems their chronological order has been followed for the most part, as this shows the growth of the mind of the English race on the subject. It is more than interesting to watch its evolution from comparatively crude beginnings—in which the yule-log and wassail-bowl, the boar's head, with tumultuous dance and song, were prominent elements—to the richer and nobler products of succeeding years. Milton's great *Ode* is, however, placed first in the series, as that poem not only represents the highest watermark of English genius on the subject, but is also perhaps the finest thing he ever wrote. It has not been found possible, in every case, to find out the particular year in which each poem was written ; when it is known, it is printed at the end of the verses ; and the year of the birth and death of the writer is indicated immediately after his or her name, in the line following the title of the poem. When a date is uncertain, c. (for circa) is prefixed to it ; when left unfilled, it is either unknown, or the writer is still alive.

The collection is not limited to poems referring to Christmas Day. It includes Advent and Epiphany hymns, as well as those on the Nativity in general.

The occasional omission of stanzas must be explained. It does not occur frequently, and is always indicated by points (. . .) inserted between the verses quoted. The reason for the omission is that the stanzas—designedly left out—are sometimes trivial, occasionally tawdry, and they frequently obtrude opinion where dogma should be concealed, or suggested rather than emphasized. Sir Roundell Palmer (Lord Selborne) wrote, in the preface to his admirable *Book of Praise*, “There is far more dross than gold in the works of all voluminous hymn-writers.” Some of our choicest have prosaic lines, and uncouth words, or halting stanzas. Others have archaic phrases which have long since fallen into desuetude, and of which there can be no resuscitation. These phrases are usually, although not always, removed in this collection. They are removed, when an equally fitting or more appropriate one can be found; they are retained, when they bring out by contrast the loveliness of the lines which lie embedded in them, like golden ore in veins of quartz.

In two instances the text of a poem has been slightly changed. That fact is also indicated, when it occurs, by the author’s name being printed in italics. The reason for the alteration is the same as in the case of the omission of stanzas. Very often a really noble poem is seriously marred by a single faulty line, or even by an infelicitous word; and it should be remembered that the authors of some of our greatest poems have not unfrequently altered their own text in new editions of their works. In these

cases it is an editor's duty to print neither the latest text, nor the earliest one; but to select what he considers the best version on the whole. He may err in judgement; but the decision rests with him, and with posterity, which will either approve or condemn him. Here again the words of Lord Selborne may be quoted: "The Wesleys altered the compositions of George Herbert, Sandys, Austin, and Watts. Toplady and others altered some of Charles Wesley's. . . . Bishop Heber—scholar as he was, and editor of Jeremy Taylor's works—silently altered the *Advent Hymn* in his own hymn-book; and the hymns of Heber himself, and of Keble, &c., are met with every day in a variety of forms which their authors would hardly recognize. Some such variations of hymns are, however, sufficiently good to take rank as new compositions, better than those by which they were suggested."

As to the titles of the poems, when a writer has not given one, the first line of his composition, printed in full within inverted commas, is invariably used as the title; so that everything, except the author's name, and the years of his birth and death, are his own writing. No literary practice is more reprehensible than for an editor to invent a title, and place it above a poem or a hymn, without informing his reader that he has done so, and that the title he has given was not the work of the author. This occurs in dozens of anthologies, hymnals, and miscellaneous collections of English verse. It disfigures even the excellent *Golden Treasury* of the late F. T. Palgrave, and it

absolutely vitiates numerous collections in which the title of nearly every hymn ignores that given to it by its author, and is the unaccredited and often inaccurate manufacture of the editor.

In reference to punctuation and capital letters, as well as brackets and dashes in the text, many writers have been so capricious in their use of them that their practice cannot wisely be followed. A superabundance of capital letters always disfigures a page ; and, while "He," "Him," and "Thou"—when they refer to the Divine Name or nature—invariably have capitals, "his," "thy," and "thine" have none. I may add that the random insertion of an apostrophe before the final letter of a word ending with d, to guide the reader in pronunciation, is useless as well as gratuitous. Throughout this volume, as in others I have edited, the "ed" is printed in full, without the use of an apostrophe in place of the vowel.

I place in the Appendix an ancient anonymous hymn, and its modernization by Mrs. Craik, *née* Dinah Maria Mulock ; also an ancient Christmas carol from a MS. in the British Museum, and a good many poems accidentally omitted from their chronological place.

In conclusion, it may be suggested that a collection of the most notable passages of English prose referring to Christmas would be a useful supplement to these gleanings from our poets on the subject.

W. K.

THE ATHENAEUM, LONDON,

July, 1907.

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TO MY FRIEND AND SECRETARY
EDITH BURMAN

*Noëls, Carols—Christmas Song—
Old, and young, and ever true ;
These from such a wondrous throng
All are sent, my friend, to you.*

*You inspired them, and you traced them
Line by line, along, along ;
Helped in all the work that made them
Now a Noël-book of song.*

*Thus to you they come indited
By a pen that's now grown old ;
This its ending, not its mending,
In a stylograph of gold.*

*But we wish, both you and I,
That the book may find its way
To the souls that long for vision
In the open realms of day.*

WILLIAM ANGUS KNIGHT.

THE POETS ON CHRISTMAS



On the Morning of Christ's Nativity

MILTON, JOHN (1608-1674).

IT was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born Child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature in awe to Him
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow;
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw:
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But He, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crowned with olives green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land

The Poets on Christmas

No war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around :

The idle spear and shield were high up hung ;
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood ;

The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng ;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of Light

His reign of peace upon the earth began :
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,

Whispering new joys to the wild oceàn,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd
wave.

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,

Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,

Or Lucifer that often warned them thence ;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord Himself bespake, and bid them go.

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,

The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame

The new-enlightened world no more should need ;
He saw a brighter Sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burning axletree, could
bear.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or e'er the first of dawn,

Sate simply chatting in a rustic row ;
Full little thought they then,
That the mighty Pan

Was kindly come to live with them below ;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly¹ thoughts so busy keep.

When such music sweet

Their hearts and ears did greet,

As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely warbled voice

Answering the stringèd noise,

As all their souls in blissful rapture took :

The air, such pleasure loth to lose,

With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly
close.

Nature that heard such sound,

Beneath the hollow round

Of Cynthia's seat the aery region thrilling,

Now was almost won

To think her task was done,

And that her reign had here its last fulfilling ;

She knew such harmony alone

Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight

A globe of circular light,

That with long beams the shame-faced night arrayed ;

The helmèd Cherubim,

And sworded Seraphim,

Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,

Harping, in loud and solemn quire,

With unexpressive notes, to heaven's new-born heir.

¹ simple.—Ed.

The Poets on Christmas

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made

But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set

And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel
keep.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,

If ye have power to touch our senses so ;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,

And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow ;
And, with your ninefold harmony,
Make up full concert to the angelic symphony.

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,

Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold ;
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon and die,

And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould,
And hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering
day.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,

Orbed in a rainbow ; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,

With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering ;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

But wisest Fate says No,
This must not yet be so ;
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss ;
So both Himself and us to glorify :
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through
the deep,

With such a horrid clang,
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smouldering clouds out-
brake ;
The agèd earth aghast
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the centre shake,
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his
throne.

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins ; for, from this happy day,
The old Dragon, under ground
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway,
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

The oracles are dumb :
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving :
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving :
No nightly trance, or breathèd spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

The Poets on Christmas

The lonely mountains o'er
And the resounding shore,

A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament ;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,

The parting genius is with sighing sent ;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets
mourn.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,

The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint ;
In urns, and altars round,
A drear and dying sound

Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint ;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar Power forgoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Baälim

Forsake their temples dim,

With that twice-battered god of Palestine ;
And moonèd Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,

Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine ;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz
mourn.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread

His burning idol all of blackest hue ;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,

In dismal dance about the furnace blue :
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud ;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest ;
Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud :
In vain with timbrelled anthems dark
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand,
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn ;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Nor Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine ;
Our Babe to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnèd
crew.

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave ;
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved
maze.

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest,
Time is, our tedious song should here have ending :
Heaven's youngest-teemèd star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending :
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

“Bethlehem! of noblest Cities”

PRUDENTIUS, AURELIUS CLEMENS (c. 348–c. 413).

Translated by EDWARD CASWALL (1814–1878).

BETHLEHEM! of noblest cities
 None can once with thee compare :
 Thou alone the Lord from heaven
 Didst for us incarnate bear.

Fairer than the sun at morning
 Was the star that told his birth ;
 To the lands their God announcing,
 Hid beneath a form of earth.

By its lambent beauty guided
 See the eastern kings appear ;
 See them bend, their gifts to offer,
 Gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh.

Offerings of mystic meaning!—
 Incense doth the God disclose ;
 Gold a royal Child proclaimeth ;
 Myrrh a future tomb foreshows.

Holy Jesu! in thy brightness
 To the Gentile world displayed,
 With the Father and the Spirit
 Endless praise to Thee be paid!

1873.

“O that birth, for ever blessed!”

PRUDENTIUS, AURELIUS CLEMENS (c. 348–c. 413).

Translated by JOHN MASON NEALE (1818–1866) and Sir HENRY
WILLIAM BAKER (1821–1877).

· · · · ·
O THAT birth, for ever blessed !
When the Virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bare the Saviour of our race,
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed his sacred face,
Evermore and evermore.

This is He whom seers in old time
Chanted of with one accord,
Whom the vision of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word ;
Now He shines, the long-expected ;
Let creation praise its Lord,
Evermore and evermore.

O ye heights of heaven adore Him,
Angel-hosts his praises sing ;
All dominions bow before Him,
And extol our God and King :
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Every voice in concert ring,
Evermore and evermore.

· · · · ·
There let old men, there let young men,
There let boys in chorus sing ;
Matrons, virgins, little maidens,
With glad voices answering ;
Let their guileless songs re-echo,
And the heart its praises bring,
Evermore and evermore.



The Poets on Christmas

A Christ-Mas Carroll

THOMAS À KEMPIS (C. 1380-1471).

O SWEETEST Jesus,
Come from heaven
That life might to the world
Be given.

Of Thee I'll write, of Thee I'll read ;
Thee will I seek, Thee will I sing,
Jesus my dearest Lord,
My King.

.

Thou pardon'st much
To lovers that
Once loving Thee, forsake
Thee not.

.

'Tis soul's delight,
'Tis all our glory,
Jesus, to read thine humble
Story.

.

Let's now rejoice ;
Lo Christ is here,
Let captive souls put off
Their fear.

.

O Jesu dear !
Whose heavenly light
Makes day appear, amidst
Our night.

.

But, O I'le aye
This Carol sing,
I'me brother now to Christ
My King.

.

Grant Jesus, grant
My heart may be
A burning sacrifice
To Thee.



Christ's Nativity

DUNBAR, WILLIAM (c. 1460—c. 1525).

NOW gladdeth every living créature
With bliss and comfortable gladness,
The Heaven's King is clad in our natúre,
Us from the death with ransom to redress;
The lamp of joy that chaseth all darknéss,
Ascended is to be the world's Light,
From every vale our boundaries for to bless,
Born of the glorious Virgin Mary bright.

Above the radiant heaven's ethereal,
The court of stars, the course of sun and moon,
The potent Prince of Joy imperial,
The high surrounding Emperor alone
Is coming from his mighty Father's throne
To earth with an inestimable light,
And praised of angels with a sweet intone;
Born of the glorious Virgin Mary bright.

And who on earth e'er heard so blythe a story,
Or tidings of so great felicity?
As how the owner of all grace and glory
For love of us hath ta'en humanity;

The Poets on Christmas

Maker of angels, man, earth, heaven, and sea,
 To overcome our foe, and put to flight,
 Coming a babe, full of benignity,
 Born of the glorious Virgin Mary bright.

The sovereign senior of all celsitude,
 That sits above the ordered Cherubin,
 Which all things doth create, and all include,
 That never end shall, never did begin,
 Without whom nothing is, no time doth rin,
 With whom all good is, also every wight,
 Is with his grace come for to wash our sin,
 Born of the glorious Virgin Mary bright.

All welcome we the Prince of Paradise,
 Born of the glorious Virgin Mary bright.



Christmas Eve

A CAROL

LUTHER, MARTIN (1483-1546).

Written for his son Hans; translated by CATHERINE WINK-
 WORTH (1829-1878) in her *Lyra Germanica* (1859).

FROM Heaven above to earth I come
 To bear good news to every home;
 Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
 Whereof I now will say and sing:

To you this night is born a child
 Of Mary, chosen mother mild;
 This little child, of lowly birth,
 Shall be the joy of all your earth.

.

He brings those blessings long ago
Prepared by God for all below ;
Henceforth his kingdom open stands
To you, as to the angel bands.

.

Now let us all with gladsome cheer
Follow the shepherds, and draw near
To see this wondrous gift of God
Who hath his only Son bestowed.

E'er heed my heart, lift up thine eyes !
Who is it in yon manger lies ?
Who is this child so young and fair ?
The blessèd Christ-child lieth there.

Welcome to earth, Thou noble guest,
Through whom e'en wicked men are blest
Thou com'st to share our misery,
What can we render, Lord, to Thee !

.

Ah ! dearest Jesus, holy child,
Make thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep ;
I too must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle-song—

Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto man his Son hath given !
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.

1540.



An Hymn of Heavenly Love

SPENSER, EDMUND (1552-1599).

OUT of the bosom of eternal bliss,
 In which He reignèd with his glorious Sire,
 He down descended, like a sweet demiss
 And abject thrall, in flesh's frail attire,
 That He for him might pay sin's deadly hire,
 And him restore unto that happy state
 In which he stood before his hapless fate.

O blessèd well of Love, O flower of Grace,
 O glorious morning Star, O lamp of Light,
 Most lively image of thy Father's face,
 Eternal King of Glory, Lord of might,
 Meek Lamb of God, before all worlds behight¹,
 How can we Thee requite for all this good?
 Or what can equal them thy precious blood?

Begin from first, when He encradled was
 In simple cratch², wrapped in a wad of hay.
 Between the toilful ox and simple ass,
 And in what rags, and in how base array,
 The glory of our heavenly riches lay,
 When Him the silly,³ shepherds came to see,
 Whom greatest princes sought on lowest knee.

From thence read on the story of his life,
 His humble carriage, his unfaulty ways,
 His cankered foes, his fights, his toil, his strife,
 His pains, his purity, his sharp assays⁴,
 Through which He past his miserable days,
 Offending none, and doing good to all,
 Yet being malist⁵ both by great and small.

¹ named.—Ed. ² crib, or manger.—Ed.³ simple, or happy.—Ed. ⁴ endeavours, or trials.—Ed.⁵ envied.—Ed.

With sense whereof, whilst so thy softened spirit
Is inly touched, and humbled with meek zeal
Through meditation of his endless merit,
Lift up thy mind to the Author of thy weal,
And to his sovereign mercy do appeal ;
Learn Him to love that lovèd thee so dear,
And in thy breast his blessèd image bear.

With all thy heart, with all thy soul and mind,
Thou must Him love, and his behests embrace ;
All other loves, with which the world doth blind
Weak fancies, and stir up affections base,
Thou must renounce and utterly displace,
And give thyself unto Him full and free,
That full and freely gave Himself to thee.

Then shalt thou feel thy spirit so possessed
And ravished with devouring great desire
Of his dear Self, that shall thy feeble breast
Inflame with love, and set thee all on fire
With burning zeal, through every part entire,
That in no earthly thing thou shalt delight,
But in his sweet and amiable sight.

Thenceforth all world's desire will in thee die ;
And all earth's glory, on which men do gaze,
Seem dust and dross in thy pure-sighted eye,
Compared to that celestial beauty's blaze,
Whose glorious beams all fleshly sense doth daze
With admiration of their passing light,
Blinding the eyes, but lumining the sprite.

Then shall thy ravished soul inspirèd be
With heavenly thoughts, far above human skill,
And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see
The rays of his pure glory present still
Before thy face, that all thy spirit shall fill
With sweet enagement of celestial Love,
Kindled through sight of those fair things above.

The Poets on Christmas

New Prince, New Pomp

SOUTHWELL, ROBERT (1560-1595).

BEHOLD a silly¹ tender Babe,
 In freezing winter night,
 In homely manger trembling lies ;
 Alas ! a piteous sight.

The inns are full, no man will yield
 This little pilgrim bed ;
 But forced He is with silly beasts
 In crib to shroud his head.

Despise Him not for lying there,
 First what He is enquire ;
 An orient pearl is often found
 In depth of dirty mire.

Weigh not his crib, his wooden dish,
 Nor beast that by Him feed ;
 Weigh not his mother's poor attire,
 Nor Joseph's simple weed.

This stable is a prince's court,
 This crib his chair of state ;
 The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
 The wooden dish his plate.

The persons that in poor attire
 His royal liveries wear ;
 The Prince Himself is come from heaven,
 This pomp is praised there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight !
 Do homage to thy King ;
 And highly praise this humble pomp
 Which He from heaven doth bring.

¹ innocent.—Ed.

“Earthly Friends will change and falter”

(From an ancient Carol).

EARTHLy friends will change and falter,
 Earthly hearts will vary ;
 He is born that cannot alter,
 Of the Virgin Mary ;
 Born to-day, raise the lay.
 Jesus Christ is born to suffer,
 Born for you, holly strew ;
 Jesus Christ was born to govern,
 Born a king, bay-wreaths bring ;
 Jesus Christ was born of Mary,
 Born for all, born for all ;
 Jesus Christ was born at Christmas,
 Well befall, hearth and hall !



To God the Son

CONSTABLE, HENRY (1562-1613).

GREAT Prince of Heaven ! begotten of that King
 Who rules the kingdom that Himself did make,
 And of that Virgin Queen man's shape did take,
 Which from King David's royal stock did spring.

No marvel, though thy birth made angels sing,
 And angels' ditties shepherds' pipes awake,
 And kings, like shepherds, humbled for thy
 sake

Kneel at thy feet, and gifts of homage bring :

For heaven and earth, the high and low estate,
 As partners of thy birth make equal claim ;
 Angels because in heaven God Thee begat,
 Shepherds and kings, because thy mother came
 From princely race, and yet by poverty
 Made glory shine in her humility.

1594.

On the Nativity of my Saviour

JOHNSON, BEN (c. 1573-1631)

I SING the birth was born to-night,
 The author both of Life and Light:
 The angels so did sound it,
 And like the ravished shepherds said,
 Who saw the light and were afraid,
 Yet searched and true they found it.

The Son of God, the eternal King,
 That did us all salvation bring,
 And freed the soul from danger;
 He whom the whole world could not take,
 The Word, which heaven and earth did make,
 Was now laid in a manger.

What comfort by this do we win,
 Who made Himself the price of sin,
 To make us heirs of glory?
 To see this babe all innocence,
 A martyr born in our defence;
 Can man forget that story?



For Christmas Day

HALL, BISHOP JOSEPH (1574-1636)

IMMORTAL Babe, who this dear day
 Didst change Thine heaven for our clay,
 And dost with flesh thy Godhead veil,
 Eternal Son of God, all hail!

Shine, happy star : ye angels, sing
 Glory on high to heaven's King :
 Run, shepherds, leave your nightly watch,
 See heaven come down to Bethlehem's cratch.

Worship, ye sages of the East,
 The King of gods in meanness dressed.
 O blessed maid, smile and adore
 The God thy womb and arms have bore.

Star, angels, shepherds, and wise sages,
 Thou virgin glory of all ages,
 Rescued frame of heaven and earth,
 Joy in your dear Redeemer's birth !



The Blessed Birthday

Fitz GIFFORD, CHARLES (1575-1630).

WHY should we not with joy resound and sing
 The blessed nuptials of our heavenly King ?

Why should not we with mirth salute the morn
 Of his birthday by whom we are new-born ?

See how each creature in his kind rejoices,
 And shall we not lift up melodious voices ?

Hear how the angels sing ! Shall we be sad ?
 The greatest good is ours—be we most glad.

Hear how the star-enamelled heavens rebound
 With echoes of angelic anthems sound !

It is for us that they these joys express,
 And shall not we show forth some thankfulness ?

Join us in concert then sweet choirs among,
 In sundry voices sing we all one song.

Glory to God on high, on earth be peace,

And let good will toward Christians never

cease.



The Shepherds' Song

A CAROL, OR HYMN FOR CHRISTMAS

BOLTON, EDMUND (c. 1575—c. 1633).

SWEET music, sweeter far
 Than any song is sweet :
 Sweet music, heavenly rare,
 Mine ears, O peers, doth greet.
 You gentle flocks, whose fleeces, pearled with dew,
 Resemble heaven, whom golden drops make
 bright,
 Listen, O listen, now, O not to you
 Our pipes make sport to shorten weary night :
 But voices most divine
 Make blissful harmony :
 Voices that seem to shine,
 For what else clears the sky?
 Tunes can we hear, but not the singers see,
 The tunes divine, and so the singers be.
 Lo, how the firmament
 Within an azure fold
 The flock of stars hath pent,
 That we might them behold.
 Yet from their beams proceedeth not this light,
 Nor can their christals such reflection give.
 What then doth make the element so bright?
 The heavens are come down upon earth to live.
 But hearken to the song,
 Glory to glory's King,
 And peace all men among,
 These quiristers do sing.
 Angels they are, as also (shepherds) he
 Whom in our fear we do admire and see.

Let not amazement blind
 Your souls, said he, annoy :
 To you and all mankind
 My message bringeth joy.
 For lo, the world's great Shepherd now is born,
 A blessèd Babe, an Infant full of power :
 After long night uprisen is the morn,
 Renowing Bethl'em in the Saviour.
 Sprung is the perfect day,
 By prophets seen afar :
 Sprung is the mirthful May,
 Which winter cannot mar.
 In David's city doth this sun appear
 Clouded in flesh, yet, shepherds, sit we here ?
1630.



Of the Epiphany

BEAUMONT, SIR JOHN (1582-1628).

FAIR eastern star, that art ordained to run
 Before the sages, to the rising sun,
 Here cease thy course, and wonder that the cloud
 Of this poor stable can thy Maker shroud :
 Ye heavenly bodies glory to be bright,
 And are esteemed as ye are rich in light ;
 But here on earth is taught a different way,
 Since under this low roof the Highest lay.
 Jerusalem erects her stately towers,
 Displays her windows and adorns her bowers ;
 Yet there thou must not cast a trembling spark,
 Let Herod's palace still continue dark ;
 Each school and synagogue thy force repels,
 There Pride enthroned in misty error dwells ;
 The temple, where the priests maintain their quire,
 Shall taste no beam of thy celestial fire,

While this weak cottage all thy splendour takes :
 A joyful gate of every chink it makes.
 Here shines no golden roof, no ivory stair,
 No king exalted in a stately chair,
 Girt with attendants, or by heralds styled,
 But straw and hay enwrap a speechless child.
 Yet Sabae's lords before this babe unfold
 Their treasures, offering incense, myrrh and gold.
 The crib becomes an altar : therefore dies
 No ox nor sheep ; for in their fodder lies
 The Prince of Peace, who, thankful for his bed,
 Destroys those rites in which their blood was shed :
 The quintessence of earth he takes, and fees,
 And precious gums distilled from weeping trees ;
 Rich metals and sweet odours now declare
 The glorious blessings which his laws prepare,
 To clear us from the base and loathsome flood
 Of sense and make us fit for angels' food,
 Who lift to God for us the holy smoke
 Of fervent prayers with which we Him invoke,
 And try our actions in the searching fire
 By which the seraphims our lips inspire :
 No muddy dross pure minerals shall infect,
 We shall exhale our vapours up direct :
 No storm shall cross, nor glittering lights deface
 Perpetual sighs which seek a happy place.



Psalm for Christmas Day

PESTEL, THOMAS (1584-1659).

FAIREST of morning lights appear,
 Thou blest and gaudy day,
 On which was born our Saviour dear ;
 Arise, and come away !

This day prevents his day of doom ;
 His mercy now is nigh ;
 The mighty God of Love is come,
 The Dayspring from on high !

Behold the great Creator makes
 Himself an house of clay,
 A robe of virgin-flesh He takes
 Which He will wear for aye.

Hark, hark, the wise eternal Word,
 Like a weak infant cries ;
 In form of servant is the Lord,
 And God in cradle lies.

This wonder struck the world amazed,
 It shook the starry frame ;
 Squadrons of spirits stood, and gazed,
 Then down in troops they came.

Glad shepherds ran to view this sight ;
 A quire of angels sings ;
 And eastern sages with delight
 Adore this King of kings.

Join them, all hearts that are not stone,
 And all our voices prove,
 To celebrate this Holy One,
 The God of Peace and love.



The Shepherds

DRUMMOND, WILLIAM (1585-1649).

O H than the fairest day, thrice fairer night !
 Night to blest days, in which a sun doth rise
 Of which that golden eye which clears the skies
 Is but a sparkling ray, a shadow-light !

And blessed ye, in silly pastors' sight,
 Mild creatures, in whose warm crib now lies
 That heaven-sent youngling, holy maid-born wight,
 Midst, end, beginning of our prophecies!
 Blest cottage that hath flowers in winter spread,
 Though withered—blessed grass that hath the
 grace
 To deck and be a carpet to that place!
 Thus sang, unto the sounds of oaten reed,
 Before the Babe, the shepherds bowed on knees;
 And springs ran nectar, honey dropped from trees.



The Angels for the Nativity of our Lord

DRUMMOND, WILLIAM (1585-1649).

RUN, shepherds, run where Bethlehem blest
 appears;
 We bring the best of news, be not dismayed.
 A Saviour there is born, more old than years,
 Amid heaven's rolling heights, this earth who stayed;
 In a poor cottage inned, a virgin maid
 A weakling did Him bear who all upbears;
 There is He poorly wrapt, in manger laid,
 To whom too narrow swaddlings are our spheres:
 Run, shepherds, run, and solemnize his birth.
 This is that night—no, day—grown great with bliss,
 In which the power of Satan broken is;
 In Heaven be glory, peace unto the earth!
 Thus singing through the air the angels swam,
 And cope of stars re-echoèd the same.



Christmas Day

WITHER, GEORGE (1588-1667).

AS on the night before this blessèd morn
 A troop of angels unto shepherds told,
 Where in a stable He was poorly born,
 Whom nor the earth, nor heaven of heavens can hold.

Through Bethlehem rang

This news at their return ;

Yea, angels sang,

That God with us was born ;

And they made mirth, because we should not mourn.

Their angels' carol sing we then,

To God on high all glory be ;

For peace on earth bestoweth He,

And showeth favour unto men.

This favour Christ vouchsafeth for our sake :

To buy us thrones He in a manger lay ;

Our weakness took, that we his strength might take,

And was disrobed, that He might us array :

Our flesh He wore,

Our sins to wear away ;

Our curse He bore,

That we escape it may ;

And wept for us, that we might sing for aye.

With angels therefore sing again,

To God on High all glory be,

For peace on earth bestoweth He,

And showeth favour unto men.



A Christmas Carol

WITHER, GEORGE (1588-1667).

SO now is come our joyful feast,
Let every man be jolly ;
Each room with ivy leaves is drest,
And every post with holly,
And those that hardly all the year
Had bread to eat or rags to wear,
Will have both clothes and dainty fare,
And all the day be merry.

Now every lad is wondrous trim,
And no man minds his labour ;
Our lasses have provided them
A bagpipe and a tabor.
Young men and maids, and girls and boys,
Give life to one another's joys ;
And you anon shall by their noise
Perceive that they are merry.

Mark now the wags abroad do call
Each other forth to rambling ;
Anon you'll see them in the hall,
For nuts and apples scrambling,
Hark how the roofs with laughter sound,
Anon they'll think the house goes round ;
For they the season's depths have found,
And thus they will be merry.

Then wherefore in these merry days
Should we, I pray, be duller ?
No, let us sing some roundelays
To make our mirth the fuller.
And whilst we thus inspirèd sing,
Let all the streets with echoes ring ;
Woods, and hills, and everything
Bear witness we are merry.

"Who can forget, never to be forgot"¹

FLETCHER, GILES (1588-1623).

WHO can forget, never to be forgot,
The time that all the world in slumber lies :
When, like the stars, the singing angels shot
To earth, and Heaven awakened all his eyes,
To see another sun at midnight rise

O'er earth? was never sight of pareil fame :
For God before, man like Himself did frame,
But God Himself now like a mortal man became.

A child He was, and had not learned to speak,
That with his word the world before did make :
His mother's arms Him bore, He was so weak,
That with one hand the vaults of Heaven could shake :
See how small room my infant Lord doth take,
When all the world is not enough to hold.

Who of his years, or of his age hath told?
Never such age so young, never a child so old.
The angels carolled loud their song of peace,
The cursèd oracles were stricken dumb ;
To see their Shepherd the poor shepherds press,
To see their King the kingly Sophirs come ;
And them to guide unto his Master's home,
A star comes dancing up the orient,
That stays for joy over the strawy tent,
When gold, to make their prince a crown they all
present.

And yet but newly He was infanted,
And yet already He was sought to die ;
Yet scarcely born, already banishèd ;
Not able yet to go, and forced to fly ;

¹ The order of the stanzas in this poem by Giles Fletcher is changed. Five of the seven stanzas are selected, and arranged thus : 3, 4, 7, 5, 2.—ED.

But scarcely fled away, when by and by,
 The tyrant's sword with blood is all defiled,
 And Rachel for her sons, with fury wild,
 Cries, O thou cruel king, and O my sweetest child.

He is a path, if any be misled ;
 He is a robe, if any naked be ;
 If any chance to hunger, He is bread ;
 If any be a bondman, He is free ;
 If any be but weak, how strong is He ?
 To dead men life He is, to sick men health ;
 To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth ;
 A pleasure without loss, a treasure without stealth.



A Christmas Carol

HERRICK, ROBERT (1591-1674).

DARK and dull night, fly hence away,
 And give the honour to this day
 That sees December turned to May.
 If we may ask the reason, say
 The why and wherefore all things here
 Seem like the Spring-time of the year.
 Why does the chilling winter's morn
 Smile like a field beset with corn ?
 Or smell like to a mead new-shorn,
 Thus, on the sudden? Come and see
 The cause why things thus fragrant be ;
 'Tis He is born, whose quickening birth
 Gives life and lustre, public mirth,
 To Heaven and the under-earth.

Chorus.

We see Him come and know Him ours,
Who, with his sunshine and his showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.

.

The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is we find a room
To welcome Him. The nobler part
Of all the house here is the heart,

Chorus.

Which we will give Him; and bequeath
This holly and this ivy wreath,
To do Him honour; who is our King,
And Lord of all this revelling.

1648.



Christmas

HERBERT, GEORGE (1593-1633).

ALL after pleasures as I rid one day,
My horse and I both tired, body and mind,
With full cry of affections quite astray,
I took up in the next inn I could find.

There, when I came, whom found I but my dear,
My dearest Lord; expecting, till the grief
Of pleasures brought me to him! ready there
To be all passengers' most sweet relief!

O Thou, whose glorious, yet contracted light,
 Wrapt in night's mantle, stole into a manger ;
 Since my dark soul and brutish is thy right,
 To man, of all beasts, be not Thou a stranger ;
 Furnish and deck my soul, that Thou may'st have
 A better lodging than a rack or grave.



Christmas

HERBERT, GEORGE (1593-1633).

THE shepherds sing ; and shall I silent be ?
 My God, no hymn for Thee ?
 My soul's a shepherd too ; a flock it feeds
 Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.
 The pasture is thy word ; the streams thy grace,
 Enriching all the place.
 Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
 Out-sing the day-light hours.
 Then we will chide the sun for letting night
 Take up his place and right :
 We sing one common Lord ; wherefore He should
 Himself the candle hold.
 I will go searching, till I find a sun
 Shall stay, till we have done ;
 A willing shiner ; that shall shine as gladly,
 As frost-nipt suns look sadly.
 Then we will sing, and shine all our own day ;
 And one another pay :
 His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so
 twine,
 Till even his beams sing, and then my music shine.



“While to Bethlem we are going”

DE CEO, VIOLANTE (1601-1693).

Translated by SIR JOHN BOWRING (1792-1872).

WHILE to Bethlem we are going,
 Tell me, Blas, to cheer the road,
 Tell me why this lovely Infant
 Quitted his divine abode.
 “From that world to bring to this,
 Peace, which of all earthly blisses,
 Is the brightest, purest bliss.”

Wherefore from his throne exalted
 Came He on this earth to dwell;
 All his pomp an humble manger,
 All his court a narrow cell?
 “From that world to bring to this,
 Peace, which of all earthly blisses,
 Is the brightest, purest bliss.”

Why did He, the Lord eternal,
 Mortal pilgrim deign to be,
 He who fashioned for his glory
 Boundless immortality?
 “From that world to bring to this,
 Peace, which of all earthly blisses,
 Is the brightest, purest bliss.”

Well, then, let us go to Bethlem:
 Thither let us haste and rest,
 For of all Heaven's gifts, the sweetest,
 Sure, is peace,—the sweetest, best.



A Hymn of the Nativity

CRASHAW, RICHARD (c. 1613-1649).

Chorus.

COME, we shepherds, whose blest sight
 Hath met Love's noon in Nature's night;
 Come lift up our loftier song,
 And wake the sun that lies too long.

To all our world of well-stolen joy
 He slept, and dreamed of no such thing,
 While we found out Heaven's fairer eye,
 And kissed the cradle of our King:
 Tell him he rises now too late
 To shew us aught worth looking at.

Tell him we now can show him more
 Than he e'er showed to mortal sight,
 Than he himself e'er saw before,
 Which to be seen needs not his light;
 Tell him, Tityrus, where thou hast been,
 Tell him, Thyrsis, what thou hast seen.

Tityrus.

Gloomy night embraced the place
 Where the noble Infant lay.
 The Babe looked up, and showed his face;
 In spite of darkness it was day.
 It was thy day, sweet, and did rise
 Not from the East, but from thine eyes.

Chorus. It was thy day, sweet, &c.

Thyrsis.

Winter died aloud, and sent
 The angry North to wage his wars:

The North forgot his fierce intent,
And left perfumes instead of scars.
By those sweet eyes' persuasive powers,
Where he meant frosts he scattered flowers.

Chorus. By those sweet eyes', &c.

Both.

We saw Thee in the balmy nest,
Young dawn of our eternal day ;
We saw thine eyes break from their east,
And chase the trembling shades away.
We saw Thee ; and we blest the sight,
We saw Thee by thine own sweet light.

Tityrus.

Poor world, said I, what wilt thou do
To entertain this starry stranger ?
Is this the best thou canst bestow—
A cold and not too cleanly manger ?
Contend, the powers of heaven and earth,
To fit a bed for this great birth.

Chorus. Contend, the powers, &c.

Thyrsis.

Proud world, said I, cease your contest,
And let the mighty Babe alone,
The phoenix builds the phoenix's nest,
Love's architecture is his own.
The Babe, whose birth embraves this morn,
Makes his own bed ere He was born.

Chorus. The Babe, whose birth, &c.

Full Chorus.

Welcome all wonders in one sight !
Eternity shut in a space !

Summer in winter! day in night!
 Heaven in earth! and God in man!
 Great little One, whose all-embracing birth
 Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.



Christ's Birth in an Inn

TAYLOR, JEREMY (1613-1667).

HE was a greater guest than ever came that way;
 For then He lay,
 That is the God of night and day,
 And over all the powers of heaven doth reign.
 It was the time of great Augustus' tax;
 And then He comes,
 That pays all sums,
 Even the whole price of lost humanity;
 And sets us free
 From the ungodly emperie
 Of sin, and Satan, and of Death.
 O make our hearts, blest God, Thy lodging-place,
 And in our breast
 Be pleased to rest,
 For Thou lov'st temples better than an inn;
 And cause that sin
 May not profane the Deity within,
 And sully o'er the ornaments of grace.



Hymn for Christmas Day

TAYLOR, JEREMY (1613-1667).

MYSTERIOUS truth ! That the self-same should be
A Lamb, a Shepherd, and a Lion too !

Yet such was He

Whom first the shepherds knew,

When they themselves became

Sheep to the Shepherd Lamb.

Shepherd of men and angels, Lamb of God,

Lion of Judah, by these titles keep

The wolf from thy endangered sheep.

Bring all the world unto thy fold,

Let Jews and Gentiles hither come

In numbers great that can't be told,

And call thy lambs that wander, home ;

Glory be to God on high,

All glories be to the glorious Deity.



"Where is this Blessèd Babe"

TAYLOR, JEREMY (1613-1667).

WHERE is this blessèd Babe
That hath made

All the world so full of joy

And expectation ;

That glorious Boy

That crowns each nation

With a triumphant wreath of blessedness ?

Where should He be but in the throng
 And among
 His angel ministers that sing
 And take wing
 Just as may echo to his voice,
 And rejoice,
 When wing, and tongue, and all
 May so procure their happiness?
 He hath other waiters now ;
 A poor cow,
 An ox and mule stand and behold
 And wonder
 That a stable should enfold
 Him that can thunder.



“ Christ was born on Christmas Day ”

[From an ancient Carol.]

CHRIST was born on Christmas Day,
 Wreathe the holly, twine the bay ;
Christus natus hodie.

He is born to set us free,
 He is born our Lord to be,
Ex Maria Virgine.

Let the bright red berries glow
 Everywhere in goodly show,
Christus natus hodie.

Christian men, rejoice and sing ;
 'Tis the birthday of a King,
Ex Maria Virgine.



The true Christmas

VAUGHAN, HENRY (1621-1695).

GO, stick up ivy and the bays,
And then restore the heathen ways,
Green will remind you of the spring,
Though this great day denies the thing,
And mortifies the earth, and all
But your wild revels and loose hall,
Could you wear flowers, and roses strowed,
Blushing upon your breasts' warm snow,
That very dress your lightness will
Rebuke, and wither at the ill.
The brightness of this day we owe
Not unto music, masque, nor show:
Nor gallant furniture, nor plate,
But to the manger's mean estate.
His life while here, as well as birth,
Was but a check to pomp and mirth:
And all man's greatness you may see
Condemned by His humility.

Then leave your open house and noise,
To welcome Him with holy joys,
And the poor shepherds' watchfulness;
Whom light and hymns from Heaven did bless,
What you abound with cast abroad
To those that want, and ease your load.
Who empties thus will bring more in;
But riot is both loss and sin.
Dress finely what comes not in sight,
And then you keep your Christmas right.

1600.



The Nativity

VAUGHAN, HENRY (1621-1695).

PEACE! and to all the world! save One,
 And He, the Prince of peace, hath none!
 He travails to be born, and then
 Is born to travail more again.
 Poor Galilee, thou canst not be
 The place for His nativity.
 His restless mother's called away,
 And not delivered till she pay.

A tax! 'tis so still. We can see
 The Church thrive in her misery,
 And like her Head at Bethlehem, rise,
 When she oppressed with truth lies.
 Rise? Should all fall we cannot be
 In more extremities than He.
 Great Type of passions! come what will,
 Thy grief exceeds all copies still.
 Thou cam'st from Heaven to earth, that we
 Might go from earth to Heaven with Thee:
 And though Thou found'st no welcome here,
 Thou didst provide us mansions there.
 A stable was thy court, and when
 Men turned to beasts, beasts could be men:
 They were thy courtiers: others none:
 And their poor manger was thy throne.
 No swaddling silks thy limbs did fold,
 Though Thou couldst turn thy rags to gold.
 No rockers¹ waited on thy birth,
 No cradles stirred, nor songs of mirth:
 But her chaste lap and sacred breast,
 Which lodged Thee first, did give Thee rest.

¹ The curved support on which a cradle rocks.

But stay! what light is that doth stream
 And drop here in a gilded beam?
 It is thy star runs Page, and brings
 Thy tributary Eastern Kings.
 Lord! grant some light to us; that we
 May find with them the way to Thee!
 Behold what mists eclipse the day!
 How dark it is! Shed down one ray,
 To guide us out of this dark night,
 And say once more, "Let there be light!"
 1656.



Christ's Nativity

VAUGHAN, HENRY (1621-1695).

A WAKE, glad heart! get up, and sing!
 It is the birthday of thy King.
 Awake! awake!
 The sun doth shake
 Light from his locks, and all the way
 Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.
 Awake, awake! hark, how the wood rings;
 Winds whisper, and the busy springs
 A concert make;
 Awake! awake!
 Man is their high-priest, and should rise
 To offer up the sacrifice.
 I would I were some bird, or star,
 Fluttering in woods, or lifted far
 Above this inn
 And road of sin!
 Then either star or bird should be
 Shining or singing still to Thee.

The Poets on Christmas

I would I had in my best part
 Fit rooms for Thee! or that my heart
 Were so clean as
 Thy manger was!
 But I am all unhallowed, mean;
 Yet, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make clean.

Blest Jesu! will then. Let no more
 Thy dying servant close the door.
 Cure him, ease him,
 O release him!
 And let once more by mystic birth,
 The Lord of life be born on earth.



The Shepherds

VAUGHAN, HENRY (1621-1695).

SWEET harmless livers, on whose holy leisure
 Waits innocence and pleasure,
 Whose leaders to those pastures and clear springs
 Were Patriarchs, Saints, and Kings;
 How happened it that in the dead of night
 You only saw true light,
 While Palestine was fast asleep, and lay
 Without one thought of day?
 Was it because those first and blessed swains
 Were pilgrims on those plains,
 When they received the promise, for which now
 'Twas there first shown to you?
 'Tis true, He loves that dust whereon they go
 That serve Him here below,

And therefore might for memory of those
His love then first disclose ;
But wretched Salem, once His love, must now
No voice nor vision know,
Her stately piles with all their height and pride
Now languishèd and died,
And Bethlem's humble cots above them stept,
While all her seërs slept ;
Her cedar, fir, hewed stones, and gold were all
Polluted through their fall,
And those once sacred mansions were now
Mere emptiness and show.
This made the angels call at reeds and thatch,
Yet when the shepherds watch,
And God's own lodging, though He could not lack,
To be a common rack ;
No costly pride, no soft clothed luxury,
In those thin cells could lie ;
Each stirring wind and storm blew through their cots,
Which never harboured plots ;
Full of content, and love, and humble joys
Lived there without all noise ;
Perhaps some harmless cares for the next day
Did in their bosoms play,
As where to lead their sheep, what silent nook,
What springs, or shades to look,
But that was all ; and now with gladsome care
They for the town prepare ;
They leave their flock, and in a busy talk
All towards Bethlem walk
To see their soul's great Shepherd, who was come,
To bring all stragglers home ;
Where now they find Him out ; and, taught before,
That Lamb of God adore,
That Lamb whose day great kings and prophets
wished
And longed to see, but missed.

The first light they beheld was bright and gay,
 And turned their night to day ;
 But to this later light they saw in Him,
 Their day was dark and dim.



Song of the Angels

TATE, NAHUM (1652-1715).

WHILE shepherds watched their flocks by night
 All seated on the ground,
 The angel of the Lord came down,
 And glory shone around.

“Fear not,” said he ; (for mighty dread
 Had seized their troubled mind ;)
 “Glad tidings of great joy I bring
 To you, and all mankind.”

“To you, in David’s town, this day
 Is born of David’s line
 The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord ;
 And this shall be the sign.

“The heavenly Babe you there shall find
 To human view displayed,
 All meanly wrapt in swathing bands,
 And in a manger laid.”

Thus spake the seraph ; and forthwith
 Appeared a shining throng
 Of angels, praising God, and thus
 Addressed their joyful song.

“All glory be to God on high,
 And to the earth be peace :
 Goodwill henceforth from Heaven to men
 Begin, and never cease !”

Christmas

GAY, JOHN¹ (1685-1732).

WHEN rosemary and bays, the poet's crown,
Are bawled in frequent cries through all the
town,

Then judge the festival of Christmas near,
Christmas the joyous period of the year.
Now with bright holly all your temples strow,
With laurel green, and sacred mistletoe.
Now, heaven-born Charity, thy blessings shed ;
Bid meagre want uprear her sickly head ;
Bid shivering limbs be warm, let Plenty's bowl
In humble roofs make glad the needy soul.
See, see, the heaven-born maid her blessings shed,
Lo ! meagre Want uprears her sickly head,
Clothed are the naked, and the needy glad,
While selfish Avarice alone is sad.



A Hymn for Christmas

BYROM, JOHN (1691-1763).

CHRISTIANS, awake, salute the happy morn
Whereon the Saviour of the world was born ;
Rise, to adore the mystery of love,
Which hosts of angels chanted from above.

.

He spake ; and straightway the celestial choir
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire :
The praises of redeeming love they sang,
And heaven's whole arch with allelujahs rang.

¹ From *Trivia*, II, 437-50.

God's highest glory was their anthem still,
 Peace upon earth, and unto men good-will.
 To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds ran,
 To see the wonder God had wrought for man ;

And found, with Joseph and the blessèd Maid,
 Her Son, the Saviour, in a manger laid.
 Amazed, the wondrous story they proclaim,
 The first apostles of his infant fame ;

While Mary keeps and ponders in her heart
 The heavenly vision which the swains impart,
 They to their flocks, still praising God, return,
 And their glad hearts within their bosoms burn.

.

He that was born upon this joyful day,
 Around us all his glory shall display ;
 Saved by his love, incessant we shall sing
 Of angels, and of angel-men the King.



**“Hark, the glad sound! the Saviour
 comes”**

DODDRIDGE, PHILIP (1702-1751).

HARK, the glad sound! the Saviour comes,
 The Saviour promised long;
 Let every heart prepare a throne,
 And every voice a song!

He comes, the prisoners to release
 In Satan's bondage held;
 The gates of brass before Him burst,
 The iron fetters yield.

He comes, from thickest films of vice
To clear the mental ray,
And on the eyeballs of the blind
To pour celestial day.

He comes, the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the treasures of his grace
To enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Thy welcome shall proclaim,
And heaven's eternal arches ring
With thy belovèd name.



“Hark, how all the welkin rings!”

WESLEY, CHARLES (1707-1788).

HARK, how all the welkin rings!
“Glory to the King of kings,
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.”

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
Universal Nature say,

“Christ the Lord is born to-day.”

Christ, by highest Heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see!
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus, our Emmanuel here!

The Poets on Christmas

Hail the heavenly Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.

Mild He lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth!

Come, Desire of nations, come,
Fix in us thy humble home;
Rise, the woman's conquering Seed,
Bruise in us the serpent's head.

Now display thy saving power,
Ruined Nature now restore;
Now in mystic union join
Thine to ours, and ours to thine.

1742.



"Hark! the herald-angels sing"

WESLEY, CHARLES (1707-1788); [altered by WHITEFIELD, GEORGE (1753); MADAN, MARTIN (1760), and others.]

HARK! the herald-angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

*Hark! the herald-angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.*

Christ, by highest Heaven adored,
 Christ, the everlasting Lord,
 Late in time behold Him come,
 Offspring of a Virgin's womb.
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
 Hail the incarnate Deity!
 Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
 Jesus, our Emmanuel.

*Hark! the herald-angels sing,
 Glory to the new-born King.*

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all He brings,
 Risen with healing in his wings.
 Mild He lays his glory by,
 Born that man no more may die,
 Born to raise the sons of earth,
 Born to give them second birth.

*Hark! the herald-angels sing,
 Glory to the new-born King.*

1743.



“The race that long in darkness pined”

MORRISON, JOHN (1749-1798).

THE race that long in darkness pined
 Have seen a glorious Light:
 The people dwell in day, who dwelt
 In Death's surrounding night.
 To hail thy rise, Thou better Sun,
 The gathering nations come,
 Joyous as when the reapers bear
 The harvest-treasures home.

The Poets on Christmas

For Thou our burden hast removed,
 And quelled the oppressor's sway,
 Quick as the slaughtered squadrons fell
 In Midian's evil day.

To us a Child of Hope is born,
 To us a Son is given ;
 Him shall the tribes of earth obey,
 Him all the hosts of heaven.

His name shall be the Prince of Peace,
 For evermore adored,
 The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
 The great and mighty Lord.

His power increasing still shall spread,
 His reign no end shall know ;
 Justice shall guard his throne above,
 And peace abound below.

1770.



A Hymn for Christmas Day

CHATTERTON, THOMAS (1752-1770).

ALMIGHTY Framers of the skies !
 Oh, let our pure devotion rise,
 Like incense in thy sight !
 Wrapt in impenetrable shade
 The texture of our souls was made
 Till thy command gave light.

The sun of glory gleamed the ray,
 Refined the darkness into day,
 And bid the vapour fly :
 Impelled by his eternal love
 He left his palaces above
 To cheer our gloomy sky.

How shall we celebrate the day,
When God appeared in mortal clay,
The mark of worldly scorn ;
When the archangel's heavenly lays
Attempted the Redeemer's praise
And hailed salvation's morn !

A humble form the Godhead wore,
The pains of poverty He bore,
To gaudy pomp unknown ;
Though in a human walk He trod,
Still, 'twas the man Almighty God
In glory all his own.

Depressed, oppressed, the Godhead bears
The torments of this vale of tears ;
Nor bade his vengeance rise ;
He saw the creatures He had made
Revile his power, his peace invade ;
He saw with mercy's eyes.

How shall we celebrate his name,
Who groaned beneath a life of shame,
In all afflictions tried !
The soul is raptured to conceive
A truth, which beings must believe,
The God eternal died.

My soul, exert thy powers, adore,
Upon devotion's plumage soar
To celebrate the day :
The God from whom creation sprung
Shall animate my grateful tongue ;
From Him I'll catch the lay !

“The minstrels played their Christmas
tune”

WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM (1770–1850).

THE minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage-eaves ;
While, smitten by a lofty moon,
The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
That overpowered their natural green.

Through hill and valley every breeze
Had sunk to rest with folded wings ;
Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
Nor check the music of the strings :
So stout and hardy were the band
That scraped the chords with strenuous hand !

And who but listened ?—till was paid
Respect to every inmate's claim :
The greeting given, the music played,
In honour of each household name,
Duly pronounced with lusty call,
And “Merry Christmas” wished to all.

.

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
On these expected annual rounds :
Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
Or they are offered at the door
That guards the lowliest of the poor.¹

¹ From the Dedication of the Sonnets on *The River Duddon*.

“Angels, from the realms of glory”

MONTGOMERY, JAMES (1771-1854).

ANGELS, from the realms of glory,
 Wing your flight o'er all the earth ;
 Ye who sang creation's story
 Now proclaim Messiah's birth ;
 Come and worship,
 Worship Christ, the new-born King.

Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
 Watching o'er your flocks by night,
 God with man is now residing,
 Yonder shines the infant light ;
 Come and worship,
 Worship Christ, the new-born King.

Sages, leave your contemplations,
 Brighter visions beam afar ;
 Seek the great Desire of Nations ;
 Ye have seen his natal-star ;
 Come and worship,
 Worship Christ, the new-born King.

Saints, before the altar bending,
 Watching long in hope and fear,
 Suddenly, the Lord descending,
 In his temple shall appear ;
 Come and worship,
 Worship Christ, the new-born King.

Sinners, wrung with true repentance,
 Doomed for guilt to grievous pains,
 Justice now revokes the sentence,
 Mercy calls you, breaks your chains ;
 Come and worship,
 Worship Christ, the new-born King.

“Songs of Praise awoke the morn.”

MONTGOMERY, JAMES (1771-1854).

SONGS of praise awoke the morn
 When the Prince of Peace was born;
 Songs of praise awoke when He
 Captive led captivity.

Heaven and earth must pass away,
 Songs of praise shall crown that day;
 God will make new heaven and earth,
 Songs of praise shall hail their birth.

Saints below, with heart and voice,
 Still in songs of praise rejoice;
 Learning here, by faith and love,
 Songs of praise to sing above.

1820.



Christmas

SCOTT, SIR WALTER (1771-1832).

HEAP on more wood!—the wind is chill;
 But let it whistle as it will,
 We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
 Each age has deemed the new-born year
 The fittest time for festal cheer:

And well our Christian sires of old
 Loved when the year its course had rolled,
 And brought blithe Christmas back again,
 With all his hospitable train.
 Domestic and religious rite
 Gave honour to the holy night;

On Christmas Eve the bells were rung,
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung :
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen,
The hall was dressed with holly green ;
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe,
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all ;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose ;
The lord underogating share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

Still linger, in our northern clime,
Some remnants of the good old time ;
And still, within our valleys here,
We hold the kindred title dear,
Even when, perchance, its far-fetched claim
To Southern ear sounds empty name ;
For course of blood, our proverbs deem,
Is warmer than the mountain stream ;
And thus, my Christmas still I hold,
Where my great-grandsire came of old,
With amber beard, and flaxen hair,
With reverend apostolic air,
The feast and holy tide to share,
And mix sobriety with wine,
And honest mirth with thoughts divine.¹

¹ From the Introduction to the sixth canto of *Marmion*.—Ed.

The Virgin's Cradle-Hymn

COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR (1772-1834).

COPIED FROM A PRINT OF THE VIRGIN IN A ROMAN CATHOLIC
VILLAGE IN GERMANY.

DORMI, Jesu ! Mater ridet
 Quae tam dulcem somnum videt,
 Dormi, Jesu ! blandule !
 Si non dormis, Mater plorat
 Inter fila cantans orat,
 Blande, veni, somnule.

English.

Sleep, sweet Babe ! my cares beguiling :
 Mother sits beside Thee smiling ;
 Sleep, my darling, tenderly !
 If Thou sleep not, mother mourneth,
 Singing as her wheel she turneth :
 Come, soft slumber, balmily !



A Christmas Carol

COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR (1772-1834).

THE shepherds went their hasty way,
 And found the lowly stable-shed
 Wherein the Virgin-Mother lay ;
 And now they checked their eager tread,
 For to the Babe that at her bosom clung,
 A mother's song the Virgin-Mother sung.

They told her how a glorious light,
Streaming from a heavenly throng,
Around them shone, suspending night!
While sweeter than a mother's song,
Blest angels heralded the Saviour's birth,
Glory to God on high! and peace on earth.

She listened to the tale divine,
And closer still the Babe she pressed;
And while she cried, "The Babe is mine!"
The milk rushed faster to her breast:
Joy rose within her, like a summer's morn;
Peace, peace on earth! the Prince of Peace is
born.

"Thou Mother of the Prince of Peace,
Poor, simple, and of low estate!
That strife should vanish, battle cease,
O why should this thy soul elate?
Sweet Music's loudest note, the poet's story—
Did'st thou ne'er love to hear of fame and glory?

"And is not war a youthful king,
A stately hero clad in mail?
Beneath his footsteps laurels spring;
Him earth's majestic monarchs hail
Their friend, their playmate! and his bold bright
eye
Compelleth the maiden's love-confessing sigh."

"Tell this in some more courtly scene,
To maids and youths in robes of state!
I am a woman poor and mean,
And therefore is my soul elate.
War is a ruffian, all with guilt defiled,
That from the agèd father tears his child.

The Poets on Christmas

"A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,
 He kills the sire and starves the son ;
 The husband kills, and from her board
 Steals all his widow's toil had won ;
 Plunders God's world of beauty ; rends away
 All safety from the night, all comfort from the day.

"Then wisely is my soul elate,
 That strife should vanish, battle cease ;
 I'm poor, and of a low estate,
 The Mother of the Prince of Peace.
 Joy rises in me, like a summer's morn ;
 Peace, peace on earth ! the Prince of Peace is
 born."



The Nativity

TRANSLATION OF A PASSAGE IN OTTFRIED'S METRICAL
 PARAPHRASE OF THE GOSPEL.

COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR (1772-1834).

SHE gave with joy her virgin breast :
 She hid it not, she bared the breast
 Which suckled that divinest Babe !
 Blessèd, blessèd, were the breasts
 Which the Saviour infant kissed :
 Who wrapped his limbs in swaddling clothes,
 Singing, placed Him on her lap,
 Hung o'er Him with her looks of love,
 And soothed Him with a lulling motion.
 Blessèd, for she sheltered Him
 From the damp and chilling air,
 Blessèd, blessèd evermore,
 With her virgin lips she kissed,
 With her arms and to her breast
 She embraced the Babe divine,
 Her Babe divine, the Virgin-Mother !

There lives not on this ring of earth
 A mortal that can sing her praise.
 Mighty Mother, Virgin pure,
 In the darkness and the night,
 For us she bore the heavenly Lord.

1799.



Homeless

COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR (1772-1834).

‘ O ! CHRISTMAS Day, Oh ! happy day,
 A foretaste from above,
 To him who hath a happy home
 And love returned from love !’

[On the above.]

O ! Christmas Day, O ! gloomy day,
 The barb in Memory’s dart,
 To him who walks alone through Life,
 The desolate in heart.

1810?



Lines

ON THE PICTURE BY LEONARDO DA VINCI, CALLED “ THE
 VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS ”.

LAMB, CHARLES (1775-1834).

WHILE young John runs to greet
 The greater Infant’s feet,
 The Mother, standing by, with trembling passion
 Of devoutest admiration,
 Beholds the mystic play, and beauteous adoration ;

Nor knows as yet the full extent
 Of those so low beginnings
 From whence we date our winnings,
 But wonders at the intent
 Of those new rites and what that strange child-
 worship meant.

But at her side
 An angel doth abide,
 With such a perfect joy
 As no dim doubts alloy,
 An intuition,
 A glory, an amenity,
 Passing the dark condition
 Of blind humanity,
 As if he surely knew
 All the blest wonders should ensue,
 Or he had lately left the upper sphere,
 And had read all the sovereign schemes, and divine
 riddles there.



“Hark! what mean those holy voices”

CAWOOD, JOHN (1775-1852).

HARK! what mean those holy voices,
 Sweetly sounding through the skies?
 Lo! the angelic host rejoices;
 Loudest hallelujahs rise.
 Hallelujah!

Listen to the wondrous story
 Which they chant in hymns of joy:
 “Glory in the highest”; glory,
 Glory be to God most high.
 Hallelujah!

“Peace on earth, goodwill from heaven,
Reaching far as man is found ;
Souls redeemed, and sins forgiven,
Loud our golden harps shall sound.
Hallelujah !

“Christ is born, the great Anointed ;
Heaven and earth his glory sing !
Glad receive whom God appointed
For your Prophet, Priest, and King.
Hallelujah !”

Sons of men repeat the story,
Sing the gladness of his birth ;
Spread the brightness of his glory,
Till it cover all the earth.
Hallelujah !



Hymn on the Advent of Christ

CAMPBELL, THOMAS (1777-1844).

WHEN Jordan hushed his waters still,
And silence slept on Zion hill ;
When Salem's shepherds through the night
Watched o'er their flocks by starry light ;

Hark ! from the midnight hills around,
A voice of more than mortal sound,
In distant hallelujahs stole,
Wild murmuring o'er the raptured soul.

Then swift to every startled eye,
New streams of glory gild the sky ;
Heaven bursts her azure gates, to pour
Her spirits to the midnight hour.

The Poets on Christmas

On wheels of light, on wings of flame,
The glorious hosts to Zion came ;
High heaven with songs of triumph rang,
While thus they smote their harps, and sang,

O Zion ! lift thy raptured eye,
The long-expected hour is nigh ;
The joys of Nature rise again,
The Prince of Salem comes to reign !

See Mercy, from her golden urn,
Pours a rich stream to them that mourn ;
Behold, she binds with tender care
The bleeding bosom of despair.

He comes to cheer the trembling heart,
Bids Satan and his host depart ;
Again the day-star gilds the gloom,
Again the bowers of Eden bloom !

O Zion ! lift thy raptured eye,
The long-expected hour is nigh ;
The joys of Nature rise again,
The Prince of Salem comes to reign !



Christmas Day

HEBER, BISHOP REGINALD (1783-1826).

O SAVIOUR ! whom this holy morn
Gave to our world below,
To mortal want and labour born,
And more than mortal woe ;

Incarnate Word ! by every grief,
By each temptation tried,
Who lived to yield our ills relief,
And to redeem us, died.

If gaily clothed and proudly fed,
 In dangerous wealth we dwell,
 Remind us of thy manger bed
 And lowly cottage cell.

If, prest by poverty severe,
 In envious want we pine,
 Oh, may the Spirit whisper near,
 How poor a lot was thine.

Through fickle fortune's various scene
 From sin preserve us free ;
 Like us Thou hast a mourner been,
 May we rejoice with Thee.



Epiphany

HEBER, BISHOP REGINALD (1783-1826).

BRIGHTEST and best of the sons of the morning
 Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid ;
 Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
 Guide where the infant Redeemer is laid !

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining,
 Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall ;
 Angels adore Him, in slumber reclining,
 Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all !

Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
 Odours of Edom and offerings divine ?
 Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
 Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine ?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
 Vainly with gifts would his favour secure ;
 Richer by far is the heart's adoration,
 Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning !
 Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid ;
 Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
 Guide where the infant Redeemer is laid.

1811.



“ 'Tis come, the time so oft foretold ”

GRINFIELD, THOMAS (1788-1870).

'TIS come, the time so oft foretold,
 The time eternal love forecast ;
 Four thousand years of hope have rolled,
 And God hath sent his Son at last ;
 Let heaven, let earth, adore the plan ;
 Glory to God, and grace to man !
 To swains that watched their nightly fold,
 Of lowly lot, of lowly mind,
 To these the tidings first were told,
 That told of hope to lost mankind ;
 God gives his Son ; no more He can ;
 Glory to God, and grace to man !
 And well to shepherds first 'tis known,
 The Lord of angels comes from high,
 In humblest aspects like their own,
 Good Shepherd, for his sheep to die ;
 O height and depth, which who shall span ?
 Glory to God, and grace to man !
 Fain with those meek, those happy swains,
 Lord, I would hear that angel quire ;
 Till, ravished by celestial strains,
 My heart responds with lowly fire ;
 (That holy fire thy breath must fan ;)
 Glory to God, and grace to man !

1836.



“The Sun is rising in the East”

INGEMANN, BERNHARDT SEVERIN (1789-1862).

Translated by WILLIAM MACCALL (1812-1888), whose
nom-de-plume was GILBERT TAIT.

THE Sun is rising in the East,
Clothing the cloud with richest gold ;
O'er mountain, sea, as to a feast,
Marching with glory manifold.

.

He greets us from the home of light,
When grandest flamed the light of God.
O Star of Bethlehem ! O night
When star-inspired the wise men trod !

Yea, from the East gleams with God's sun,
A mystic glory on our race,
A splendour for a world undone,
A reflex glad from God's own face.

And all the stars their homage pay,
When bursts the sun from Eastern skies,
Image of a diviner day,
The Star whose radiance never dies.

O Star of Bethlehem ! be thine
Our hearts, our praise, our fervent love ;
To us may all the beams that shine
Be symbols of the light above.

1868.



The Nativity

MILMAN, HENRY HART (1791-1868).

AND Thou wert born of woman ! Thou didst come,
 O holiest ! to this world of sin and gloom,
 Not in thy dread omnipotent array ;
 And not by thunders strowed
 Was thy tempestuous road,
 Nor indignation burnt before Thee on thy way ;
 But Thee, a soft and naked child,
 Thy mother undefiled,
 In the rude manger laid to rest
 From off her virgin breast.

The heaven was not commanded to prepare
 A gorgeous canopy of golden air,
 Nor stooped their lamps the enthroned fires on
 high ;
 A single silent star
 Came wandering from afar,
 Gliding unchecked and calm along the liquid sky ;
 The eastern sages leading on
 As at a kingly throne,
 To lay their gold and odours sweet
 Before Thy infant feet.

The earth and ocean were not hushed to hear
 Bright harmony from every starry sphere ;
 Nor at thy presence brake the voice of song
 From all the cherub choirs
 And seraph's burning lyres
 Poured through the host of heaven the charmèd
 clouds along,
 One angel troop the strain began
 Of all the race of man
 By simple shepherds heard alone,
 That soft hosanna's tone.

And when Thou didst depart, no car of flame
 To bear Thee hence in lambent radiance came ;
 Nor visible angels mourned with drooping plumes
 Nor didst Thou mount on high
 From fatal Calvary,
 With all thine own redeemed outbursting from their
 tombs.

For Thou didst bear away from earth
 But one of human birth,
 The dying felon by thy side, to be
 In Paradise with Thee.

Nor o'er thy cross the clouds of vengeance brake ;
 A little while the conscious earth did shake
 At that foul deed by her fierce children done ;
 A few dim hours of day
 The world in darkness lay,
 Then basked in bright repose beneath the cloudless
 sun

While Thou didst sleep within the tomb,
 Consenting to thy doom ;
 Even yet the white-robed angel shone
 Upon the sealed stone.



Christmas Eve: Vespers

KEBLE, JOHN (1792-1866).

THE duteous sun hath ceased to keep
 The vigil of his wondrous birth,
 Who in few hours, while sinners sleep,
 Shall dawn on thankless earth.

The sun is set, the stars begin
 Their station in his watch on high,
 As once around that Bethlehem inn ;
 The vesper hour is nigh.

The Poets on Christmas

A little maid with eager gaze
Comes hurrying to the House of Prayer,
Shaping in heart a wild green maze
Of woodland branches there.

One look,—a cloud comes o'er her dream :
No burnished leaves, so fresh and clear,
No berries with their ripe red gleam ;
“There is no Christmas here.”

What if that little maiden's Lord,
The awful Child on Mary's knee,
Even now take up the accusing word ;—
“No Christmas here I see.”

“Where are the fruits I yearly seek,
As holy seasons pass away,
Eyes turned from ill, lips pure and meek,
A heart that strives to pray?

“Where are the glad and artless smiles,
Like clustering hollies, seen afar
At eve along the o'ershaded aisles,
With the first twilight star?”

Spare, gracious Saviour, me and mine :
Our tardy vows in mercy hear,
While on our watch the cold skies shine
Of the departing year.

Ere we again that glimmering view,
Cleansed be our hearts and lowly laid ;
The unfruitful plant do Thou renew,
And all beneath its shade.

By winter frosts and summer heats,
By prunings sharp and waterings mild,
Keen airs of Lent, and Easter sweets,
Tame Thou the sour and wild.

And dare we ask for one year more?
 Yea, there is hope: One waits on high
 To tell our contrite yearnings o'er,
 And each adoring sigh.

If He in heaven repeat our vow,
 We copying here his pure dread will,—
 O dream of joy!—the withered bough
 May blush with fruitage still.



Christmas Eve: Compline

KEBLE, JOHN (1792-1866).

REJOICE in God alway,
 With stars in Heaven rejoice,
 Ere dawn of Christ's own day
 Lift up each little voice.
 Look up with pure glad eye,
 And count those lamps on high.
 Nay, who may count them? on our gaze
 They from their deeps come out in ever-widening
 maze.

Each in his stand aloof
 Prepares his fervent beam,
 Upon that hovel roof,
 In at that door, to stream,
 Where meekly waits her time
 The whole earth's Flower and Prime;
 Where in few hours the Eternal One
 Will make a clear new day, rising before the sun.

The Poets on Christmas

Rejoice in God alway,
 With each green leaf rejoice,
 Of berries on each spray
 The brightest be your choice.
 From bower and mountain lone
 The autumnal hues are gone,
 Yet gay shall be our Christmas wreath,
 The glistening beads above, the burnished leaves
 beneath.

Such garland grave and fair
 His Church to-day adorns.
 And—mark it well—even there
 He wears his crown of thorns.
 Should aught profane draw near
 Full many a guardian spear
 Is set around, of power to go
 Deep in the reckless hand, and stay the grasping foe.

Rejoice in God alway,
 With Powers rejoice on high,
 Who now with glad array
 Are gathering in the sky,
 His cradle to attend,
 And there all lowly bend.
 But half so low as He hath bowed
 Did never highest angel stoop from brightest cloud.

Rejoice in God alway,
 All creatures, bird and beast,
 Rejoice, again I say,
 His mightiest and his least :
 From ox and ass that wait
 Here on his poor estate,
 To the four living Powers, decreed
 A thousand ways at once his awful car to speed.

Rejoice in God alway :
 With saints in Paradise
 Your midnight service say,
 For vigil glad arise.
 Even they in their calm bowers
 Too tardy find the hours
 Till He reveal the wondrous Birth :
 How must we look and long, chained here to sin
 and earth !

Ye babes, to Jesus dear,
 Rejoice in Him alway.
 Ye whom He bade draw near,
 O'er whom He loved to pray,
 Wake and lift up the head
 Each in his quiet bed.
 Listen : his voice the night-wind brings :
 He in your cradle lies, He in our carols sings.



Christmas Day

KEBLE, JOHN (1792-1866).

WHAT sudden blaze of song
 Spreads o'er the expanse of Heaven?
 In waves of light it thrills along,
 The angelic signal given,
 "Glory to God!" from yonder central fire
 Flows out the echoing lay beyond the starry choir.
 Like circles widening round
 Upon a clear blue river,
 Orb after orb, the wondrous sound
 Is echoed on for ever :
 "Glory to God on high, on earth be peace,
 And love towards men of love—salvation and release."

The Poets on Christmas

Yet stay, before thou dare
 To join that festal throng ;
 Listen, and mark what gentle air
 First stirred the tide of song :
 'Tis not, "the Saviour's born in David's
 home,
 To whom for power and health obedient worlds
 should come."

'Tis not, "the Christ the Lord ;"
 With fixed adoring look
 The choir of angels caught the word,
 Nor yet their silence broke :
 But when they heard the sign, where Christ
 should be,
 In sudden light they shone, and heavenly harmony.
 Wrapped in his swaddling bands,
 And in his manger laid,
 The Hope and Glory of all lands
 Is come to the world's aid :
 No peaceful home upon his cradle smiled ;
 Guests rudely went and came, when slept the royal
 Child.

But where Thou dwellest, Lord,
 No other thought should be,
 Once duly acclaimed and adored,
 How should I part with Thee,
 Bethlehem must lose Thee soon, but Thou
 wilt grace
 The single heart to be Thy sure abiding-place.
 Thee, on the bosom laid
 Of a pure virgin mind,
 In quiet ever, and in shade,
 Shepherd and sage may find :
 They, who have bowed untaught to Nature's
 sway,
 And they, who follow Truth along her star-paved way.

The pastoral spirits first
Approach Thee, Babe divine ;
For they in lowly thoughts are nurst,
Meet for thy lowly shrine ;
Sooner than they should miss where Thou
dost dwell,
Angels from Heaven will stoop to guide them to
thy cell.

Still, as the day comes round
For Thee to be revealed,
By watchful shepherds Thou art found,
Abiding in the field ;
All through the wintry heaven and chill
night air
In music and in light Thou dawnest on their
prayer.

O faint not ye for fear—
What though your wandering sheep,
Reckless of what they see and hear
Lie lost in wilful sleep ?
High Heaven, in mercy to your sad annoy,
Still greets you with glad tidings of immortal joy.

Think on the eternal home
The Saviour left for you ;
Think on the Lord most holy, come
To dwell with hearts untrue ;
So shall ye tread untired his pastoral ways,
And in the darkness sing your carol of high praise.

1827.



“Lo! He comes, the Lord of Glory”

BOWRING, SIR JOHN (1792-1872).

LO! He comes, the Lord of Glory,
 Peace and triumph in his train;
 Lo! He comes, by angels guarded,
 Over all the earth to reign:
 Death and darkness
 Would arrest his course in vain.

Lo! He comes, the Lord of Glory,
 Sin and sorrow scattering far;
 Lo! He comes, and at his presence,
 Woe retires, and wasting war.
 Bow before Him;
 Bow before yon orient Star.

Lo! He comes, the Lord of Glory,
 Shouts of joy his path attend;
 Lo! He comes. Let tribes and nations,
 Grateful and rejoicing, bend.
 He has triumphed,
 Saviour—Conqueror—Master—Friend.



Christmas Carol

HEMANS, FELICIA DOROTHEA (1794-1835).

O LOVELY Voices of the sky
 That hymned the Saviour's birth!
 Are ye not singing still on high,
 Ye that sang "Peace on earth"?
 To us yet speak the strains
 Wherewith, in days gone by,
 Ye blessed the Syrian swains,
 O Voices of the sky!

O clear and shining Light, whose beams
 A heavenly glory shed
 Around the palms, and o'er the streams,
 And on the shepherds' head !
 Be near through life and death,
 As in that holiest night
 Of Hope, and Joy, and Faith,
 O clear and shining Light !



Christmas Day

RICKARDS, SAMUEL (1796-1865).

THOUGH rude winds usher thee, sweet day,
 Though clouds thy face deform,
 Though Nature's grace is swept away
 Before the sleety storm :
 Even in thy sombrest wintry vest,
 Of blessèd days thou art most blest.

Nor frigid air nor gloomy morn
 Shall check our jubilee ;
 Bright is the day when Christ was born,
 No sun need shine but He ;
 Let roughest storms their coldest blow,
 With love of Him our hearts shall glow.

Inspired with high and holy thought,
 Fancy is on the wing ;
 It seems as to mine ear it brought
 Those voices carolling,
 Voices through heaven and earth that ran,
 Glory to God, goodwill to man.

I see the three shepherds gazing wild
At those fair spirits of light ;
I see them bending o'er the Child
With that untold delight
Which marks the face of those who view
Things but too happy to be true.

There, in the lowly manger laid,
Incarnate God they see ;
He stoops to take, through spotless maid,
Our frail humanity ;
Son of high God, creation's heir,
He leaves his heaven to take us there.

Through Him, Lord, we are born anew,
Thy children once again ;
Oh ! day by day our hearts renew,
That thine we may remain.
And, angel-like, may all agree,
One sweet and holy family.

Oft, as this joyous morn doth come
To speak our Saviour's love,
Oh, may it bear our spirits home
Where He now reigns above ;
That day which brought Him from the skies,
So man restores to Paradise.

Then let winds usher thee, sweet day,
Let clouds thy face deform,
Though Nature's grace is swept away
Before thy sleety storm :
Even in thy sombrest wintry vest,
Of blessèd days thou art most blest.



“Adeste Fideles”

A Latin hymn, translated by FREDERICK OAKELEY (1802-1880).

O H, come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant;
Oh, come ye, Oh, come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him
Born the King of angels;
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created;
Oh, come, let us adore Him, &c.

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above;
“Glory to God
In the highest,”
Oh, come, let us adore Him, &c.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning:
Jesu, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing;
Oh, come, let us adore Him, &c.



The Child Jesus

A CORNISH CAROL

HAWKER, ROBERT STEPHEN (1803-1875).

WELCOME that star in Judah's sky,
 That voice o'er Bethlehem's palmy glen :
 The lamp far sages hailed on high,
 The tones that thrilled the shepherd men :
 Glory to God in loftiest heaven !
 Thus angels smote the echoing chord ;
 Glad tidings unto man forgiven,
 Peace from the presence of the Lord.

The shepherds sought that birth divine,
 The Wise Men traced their guided way ;
 There, by strange light and mystic sign,
 The God they came to worship lay.
 A human Babe in beauty smiled,
 Where lowing oxen round Him trod :
 A maiden clasped her awful Child,
 Pure offspring of the breath of God.

Those voices from on high are mute,
 The star the Wise Men saw is dim ;
 But hope still guides the wanderer's foot,
 And faith renews the angel hymn :
 Glory to God in loftiest heaven !
 Touch with glad hand the ancient chord ;
 Good tidings unto man forgiven,
 Peace from the presence of the Lord.

1840.



The Virgin Mary to the Child Jesus

BROWNING, ELIZABETH BARRETT (1806-1861).

But see, the Virgin blest
 Hath laid her Babe to rest.

Milton's *Hymn to the Nativity*.

.

AND art Thou come for saving, baby-browed
 And speechless Being? art Thou come for
 saving?

The palm that grows beside our door is bowed
 By tradings of the low wind from the south,
 A restless shadow through the chamber waving;
 Upon its boughs a bird sings in the sun;
 But Thou, with that close slumber on thy mouth,
 Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
 Art come for saving, O my weary One?

.

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem.
 The dumb kine from their fodder turning them,
 Softened their hornèd faces
 To almost human gazes
 Toward the newly-born.

The simple shepherds from the star-lit brooks
 Brought visionary looks,

As yet in their astonied hearing rung
 The strange, sweet angel-tongue.

The Magi of the East, in sandals worn,
 Knelt reverent, sweeping round

With long pale beards their gifts upon the ground—
 The incense, myrrh, and gold,

These baby hands were impotent to hold.

So, let all earthlies and celestials wait

 Upon Thy royal state.

Sleep, sleep, my kingly One.

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
 New meekness to hear such utterance rest
 On mortal lips,—“I am not proud”—*not proud!*
 Albeit in my flesh God sent his Son,
 Albeit over Him my head is bowed
 As others bow before Him, still mine heart
 Bows lower than their knees. O centuries
 That roll, in vision, your futurities

My future grave athwart,—
 Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep
 Watch o'er this sleep,—
 Say of me as the Heavenly said—“Thou art
 The blesseddest of women!”—blessedest,
 Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
 Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,
 When I sit meek in Heaven!

For me—for me—
 God knows that I am feeble like the rest!—
 I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
 At midnight 'mong the hills of Galilee,
 Whose summits looked heaven-laden;
 Listening to silence, as it seemed to be
 God's voice, so soft yet strong—so fair to press
 Upon my heart, as Heaven did on the height,
 And wakes up its shadows by a light,
 And shew its vileness by a holiness.
 Then I knelt down, most silent like the night,
 Too self-renounced for fears,
 Raising my small face to the boundless blue
 Where stars did mix and tremble in my tears.
 God heard *them* falling after—with his dew.

Art Thou a King then? Come, his universe,
 Come, crown me Him a King!
 Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
 Their light where fell a curse,
 And make a crowning for this kingly brow!

What is my word? Each empyreal star
 Sits in a sphere afar
 In shining ambuscade :
 The child-brow, crowned by none,
 Keeps its unchildlike shade.
 Sleep, sleep, my crownless One.

.



Christmas Bells

LONGFELLOW, HENRY WADSWORTH (1807-1882).

I HEARD the bells on Christmas Day
 Their old familiar carols play,
 And wild and sweet
 The words repeat
 Of peace on earth, goodwill to men !
 And thought how, as the day had come,
 The belfries of all Christendom
 Had rolled along
 The unbroken song
 Of peace on earth, goodwill to men !
 Till, ringing, singing on its way,
 The world revolved from night to day,
 A voice, a chime,
 A chant sublime
 Of peace on earth, goodwill to men !
 Then from each black accursèd mouth
 The cannon thundered in the South,¹
 And with the sound
 The carols drowned
 Of peace on earth, goodwill to men !

¹ The Christmas during the American Civil War.

The Poets on Christmas

It was as if an earthquake rent
 The hearth-stones of a continent,
 And made forlorn
 The households born
 Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!
 And in despair I bowed my head;
 "There is no peace on earth," I said:
 "For hate is strong,
 And mocks the song
 Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!"
 Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
 "God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!
 The Wrong shall fail,
 The Right prevail,
 With peace on earth, goodwill to men!"



A Christmas Carol

From the NOËL BOURGUIGNON DE GUI BARÔZAI. Translated
 by HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882).

I HEAR along our street
 Pass the minstrel throngs;
 Hark! they play so sweet,
 On their hautboys, Christmas songs!
 Let us by the fire
 Ever higher
 Sing them till the night expire!
 In December ring
 Every day the chimes;
 Loud the gleemen sing
 In the streets their merry rhymes.
 Let us by the fire
 Ever higher
 Sing them till the night expire!

Shepherds at the grange,
Where the Babe was born,
Sang, with many a change,
Christmas carols until morn.

Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire !

Then good people sang
Songs devout and sweet ;
While the rafters rang,
There they stood with freezing feet.

Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire !

Nuns in frigid cells
At this holy tide,
For want of something else,
Christmas songs at times have tried.

Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire !

Washerwomen old,
To the sound they beat,
Sing by rivers cold,
With uncovered hands and feet.

Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire !

Who by the fireside stands
Stamps his feet and sings ;
But he who blows his hands
Not so gay a carol brings.

Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire !

A Christmas Carmen

WHITTIER, JOHN GREENLEAF (1807-1892).

SOUND over all waters, reach out from all lands,
The chorus of voices, the claspings of hands;
Sing hymns that were sung by the stars of the morn,
Sing songs of the angels when Jesus was born!

With glad jubilations

Bring hope to the nations!

The dark night is ending, and dawn has begun;

Rise, Hope of the ages, arise like the sun,

All speech flow to music, all hearts beat as one!

Sing the bridal of nations! with chorals of love

Sing out the war-vulture, and sing in the dove;

Till the hearts of the peoples keep time in accord,

And the voice of the world is the voice of the Lord!

Clasp hands of the nations

In strong gratulations;

The dark night is ending, and dawn has begun;

Rise, Hope of the ages, arise like the sun,

All speech flow to music, all hearts beat as one!

Blow, bugles of battle, the marches of peace;

East, west, north, and south let the long quarrel
cease:

Sing the song of great joy that the angels began,

Sing of glory to God, and of goodwill to man!

Hark! joining in chorus

The heavens bend o'er us!

The dark night is ending, and dawn has begun;

Rise, Hope of the ages, arise like the sun,

All speech flow to music, all hearts beat as one!



The Mystic's Christmas

WHITTIER, JOHN GREENLEAF (1807-1892).

"ALL hail!" the bells of Christmas rang.
"All hail!" the monks at Christmas sang,
The merry monks who kept with cheer
The gladdest day of all their year.

But still apart, unmoved thereat,
A pious elder brother sat
Silent, in his accustomed place,
With God's sweet peace upon his face.

"Why sitt'st thou thus?" his brethren cried.
"It is the blessèd Christmas-tide:
The Christmas lights are all aglow,
The sacred lilies bud and blow.

"Above our heads the joy-bells ring,
Without the happy children sing,
And all God's creatures hail the morn
On which the holy Christ was born!

"Rejoice with us: no more rebuke
Our gladness with thy quiet look."
The grey monk answered: "Keep, I pray,
Even as ye list, the Lord's birthday.

"Let heathen yule-fires flicker red
Where thronged refecting feasts are spread;
With mystery-play, and masque, and mime,
And wait-songs speed the holy time.

"The blindest faith may haply save;
The Lord accepts the things we have;
And reverence, howsoe'er it strays,
May find at last the shining ways."

The Poets on Christmas

"They needs must grope who cannot see,
The blade before the ear must be ;
As ye are feeling I have felt,
And where ye dwell I too have dwelt.

"But now, beyond the things of sense,
Beyond occasions and events,
I know, through God's exceeding grace,
Release from form and time and place.

"I listen, from no mortal tongue,
To hear the song the angels sung ;
And wait, within myself to know
The Christmas lilies bud and blow.

"The outward symbols disappear
From him whose inward sight is clear ;
And small must be the choice of days
To him who fills them all with praise !

"Keep while you need it, brothers mine,
With honest zeal your Christmas sign,
But judge not him who every morn
Feels in his heart the Lord Christ born !"



**"When Thou, O Lord, in flesh wast
drest"**

AUSTIN, JOSEPH (1808-1836).

WHEN Thou, O Lord, in flesh wast drest,
The world Thou mad'st to free,
In inn, where weary travellers rest,
Had not a room for Thee.

The holy Babe in manger rude
Was all His birth-night laid ;
Pondering God's words, in thoughtful mood,
Nigh watched the Mother-Maid.

But oh ! that wondrous midnight round
 What light, what glories throng,
 When man his infant Saviour found,
 And heard the angels' song !
 Sweet anthem ! caught from hosts on high,
 Dwell thou our hearts within ;
 Blest bridal of the earth and sky,
 Long separate through sin.
 Though all unmeet that gladsome hymn
 For harps by sin unstrung,
 That psalm, by white-robed seraphim,
 In God's own presence sung.
 Yet sometimes, when our spirit tires,
 By toil and darkness worn,
 Lord ! make us hear seraphic choirs
 And give a glimpse of morn !
 If love wax cold, and strife increase,
 Chant in our hearts again,
 "Glory to God on high, and peace
 On earth, goodwill to men !"



"When came in flesh the incarnate Word"

AUSTIN, JOSEPH (1808-1836).

WHEN came in flesh the incarnate Word,
 The heedless world slept on,
 And only simple shepherds heard
 That God had sent his Son.
 When comes the Saviour at the last,
 From west to east shall shine
 The awful pomp, and earth aghast
 Shall tremble at the sign.

Then shall the pure in heart be blest ;
 As mild He comes to them,
 As when upon the Virgin's breast
 He lay at Bethlehem :

As mild to meek-eyed love and faith,
 Only more strong to save ;
 Strengthened, by having bowed to death,
 By having burst the grave.

Lord ! who could dare see Thee descend
 In state, unless he knew
 Thou art the sorrowing sinner's Friend,
 The gracious, and the true ?

Dwell in our hearts, O Saviour blest !
 So shall Thine Advent dawn ;
 'Twixt us and Thee, our bosom-guest,
 Be but the veil withdrawn.



From "In Memoriam"

TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD (1809-1892).

XXVIII.

THE time draws near the birth of Christ :
 The moon is hid ; the night is still ;
 The Christmas bells from hill to hill
 Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
 From far and near, on mead and moor,
 Swell out and fail, as if a door
 Were shut between me and the sound :

Each voice four changes on the wind,
 That now dilate, and now decrease,
 Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
 Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wished no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again :

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controlled me when a boy ;
They bring me sorrow touched with joy,
The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXX.

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth ;
A rainy cloud possessed the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-Eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gambolled, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused : the winds were in the beech :
We heard them sweep the winter land ;
And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang ;
We sung, though every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year : impetuously we sang :

We ceased : a gentler feeling crept
Upon us : surely rest is meet :
"They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet,"
And silence followed, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range ;
Once more we sang : "They do not die
Nor lose their mental sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change ;

“Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gathered power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil.”

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night :
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

LXXVII.

Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth ;
The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-Eve :

The yule-log sparkled keen with frost,
No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who showed a token of distress ?
No single tear, no mark of pain :
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane ?
O grief, can grief be changed to less ?

O last regret, regret can die !
No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

CIII.

The time draws near the birth of Christ ;
The moon is hid, the night is still ;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallowed ground.

CV.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light :
The year is dying in the night ;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow :
The year is going, let him go ;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more ;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife ;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

The Poets on Christmas

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
 The faithless coldness of the times ;
 Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
 But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
 The civic slander and the spite ;
 Ring in the love of truth and right,
 Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
 Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
 Ring out the thousand wars of old,
 Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
 The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
 Ring out the darkness of the land,
 Ring in the Christ that is to be.



“It came upon the midnight clear”

SEARS, EDMUND HAMILTON (1810-1876).

IT came upon the midnight clear,
 That glorious song of old,
 From angels bending near the earth
 To touch their harps of gold.
 “Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,
 From Heaven’s all-gracious King:”
 The world in solemn stillness lay
 To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled ;
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world ;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And even o'er its Babel sounds
The blessèd angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
The world has suffered long ;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong ;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The song of love they bring ;
Oh ! hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing !

And ye, beneath life's crushing load
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow ;
Look now ! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing ;
Oh ! rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing !

For lo ! the days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold ;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

“Calm on the listening ear of night”

SEARS, EDMUND HAMILTON (1810-1876).

CALM on the listening ear of night
 Come Heaven's melodious strains,
 Where wild Judea stretches far
 Her silver-mantled plains ;
 Celestial choirs from courts above
 Shed sacred glories there ;
 And angels with their sparkling lyres
 Make music on the air.

The answering hills of Palestine
 Send back the glad reply,
 And greet from all their holy heights
 The Dayspring from on high.
 O'er the blue depths of Galilee
 There comes a holier calm ;
 And Sharon waves, in solemn praise,
 Her silent groves of palm.

“Glory to God !” the lofty strain
 The realm of ether fills ;
 How sweeps the song of solemn joy
 O'er Judah's sacred hills !
 “Glory to God !” the sounding skies
 Loud with their anthems ring ;
 “Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,
 From Heaven's eternal king !”

Light on thy hills, Jerusalem !
 The Saviour now is born :
 More bright on Bethlehem's joyous plains
 Breaks the first Christmas morn ;
 And brighten on Moriah's brow,
 Crowned with her temple-spires,
 Which first proclaims the new-born light,
 Clothed with its orient fires.

This day shall Christian hearts be mute
 And Christian hearts be cold?
 Oh! catch the anthem that from Heaven
 O'er Judah's mountains rolled!
 When nightly burst from seraph-harps,
 The high and solemn lay,
 "Glory to God! on earth be peace;
 Salvation comes to-day!"



A Christmas Hymn

DOMETT, ALFRED (1811-1887).

IT was the calm and silent night!
 Seven hundred years and fifty-three,
 Had Rome been growing up to night,
 And now was queen of land and sea.
 No sound was heard of clashing wars;
 Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;
 Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mars,
 Held undisturbed their ancient reign
 In the solemn midnight
 Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night!
 The senator of haughty Rome
 Impatient urged his chariot's flight,
 From lordly revel rolling home.
 Triumphal arches gleaming swell
 His breast with thoughts of boundless sway;
 What recked the Roman what befell
 A paltry province far away,
 In the solemn midnight
 Centuries ago!

The Poets on Christmas

Within that province, far away
 Went plodding home a weary boor ;
 A streak of light before him lay,
 Fallen through a half-shut stable door
 Across his path. He passed—for nought
 Told what was going on within :
 How keen the stars ! his only thought ;
 The air how calm and cold and thin,
 In the solemn midnight
 Centuries ago.

O strange indifference !—low and high
 Drownsed over common joys and cares ;
 The earth was still—but knew not why,
 The world was listening unawares.
 How calm a moment may precede
 One that shall thrill the world for ever !
 To that still moment none would heed,
 Man's doom was linked, no more to sever,
 In the solemn midnight
 Centuries ago.

It is the calm and solemn night !
 A thousand bells ring out, and throw
 Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
 The darkness, charmed and holy now.
 The night that lost no name had worn,
 To it a happy name is given ;
 For in that stable lay new-born
 The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven,
 In the solemn midnight
 Centuries ago.

Under the Holly Bough

MACKAY, CHARLES (1812-1889).

YE who have scorned each other,
Or injured friend or brother,
In the fast fading year ;
Ye who by word or deed
Have made a kind heart bleed,
Come gather here.
Let sinned against and sinning
Forget their strife's beginning,
And join in friendship now ;
Be links no longer broken,
Be sweet forgiveness spoken,
Under the holly bough.

Ye who have loved each other,
Sister and friend and brother,
In this fast fading year ;
Mother and sire and child,
Young man and maiden mild,
Come gather here ;
And let your hearts grow fonder,
As memory shall ponder
Each past unbroken vow.
Old loves and younger wooing
Are sweet in the renewing
Under the holly bough.

Ye who have nourished sadness,
Estranged from hope and gladness,
In this fast-fading year ;
Ye with o'erburdened mind,
Made aliens from your kind,
Come gather here.

The Poets on Christmas

Let not the useless sorrow
 Pursue you night and morrow.
 If e'er you hoped, hope now ;
 Take heart, uncloud your faces,
 And join in our embraces,
 Under the holly bough.



Christmas Bells

DE VERE, AUBREY (1814-1902).

SWEET-SOUNDING bells, blithe summoners to
 prayer !
 From midnight till auspicious day return
 Your far re-echoing melody, wind-borne
 From dome and tower comes bounding on the air ;
 As though the mighty voice of earth were there,
 The jubilant cry of multitudes, to warn
 Creation that a Saviour-Lord this morn
 For all had birth ! Far off, and everywhere,
 Swells the harmonious tumult ; billowy sound,
 Wild, yet concordant ; beautifully blending
 With the sonorous organ of the wind ;
 O fortunate indeed ! if there be found
 Hearts dutiful as voices. Souls ascending
 To heaven, with love sincere, faith unconfined.

Hymn for Advent

STANLEY, ARTHUR PENRHYN (1815-1881).

Dean of Westminster.

THE Lord is come ! On Syrian soil
The Child of poverty and toil ;
The Man of Sorrows, born to know
Each varying shade of human woe ;
His joy, his glory, to fulfil,
In earth and heaven, his Father's will ;
On lonely mount, by festive board,
On bitter cross, despised, adored.

The Lord is come ! Dull hearts to wake,
He speaks as never man yet spake,
The truth which makes his servants free,
The royal law of liberty.
Though heaven and earth shall pass away,
His living words our spirits stay,
And from his treasures new and old,
The eternal mysteries unfold.

The Lord is come ! In Him we trace
The fullness of God's truth and grace ;
Throughout those words and acts divine
Gleams of the eternal splendour shine ;
And from his inmost spirit flow
As from a height of sunlit snow,
The rivers of perennial life,
To heal and sweeten Nature's strife.

The Lord is come ! In every heart
Where truth and mercy claim a part ;
In every land where right is might,
And deeds of darkness shun the light ;
In every Church where faith and love
Lift earthward thoughts to things above ;
In every holy happy home,
We bless Thee, Lord, that Thou hast come !

Christmas

LYNCH, THOMAS TOKE (1818-1871).

A THOUSAND years have come and gone,
And near a thousand more,
Since happier light from Heaven shone
Than ever shone before ;
And in the hearts of old and young
A joy most joyful stirred,
That sent such news from tongue to tongue
As ears had never heard.

And we are glad, and we will sing,
As in the days of yore !
Come all, and hearts made ready bring
To welcome back once more
The day when first on wintry earth
A promised change began,
And dawning in a lowly birth
Uprose the Light of man.

For trouble such as men must bear
From childhood to fourscore,
Christ shared with us that we might share
His joy for evermore :
And twice a thousand years of strife,
Of conflict, and of sin,
May tell how large the harvest-sheaf
His patient love shall win.

“There is joy for every age”

Translated from an ancient carol by JOHN MASON NEALE
(1818-1866).

HERE is joy for every age,
Every generation :
Prince and peasant, chief and sage,
Every tongue and nation :
Every rank and station,
Hath to-day salvation :
Alleluia !

When the world drew near its close
Came our Lord and Leader ;
From the lily sprang the Rose,
From the bush the Cedar :
From the judged the Pleader,
From the faint the Feeder :
Alleluia !

God, that came on earth this morn,
In a manger lying,
Hallowed birth by being born,
Vanquished death by dying
Rallied back the flying,
Ended sin and sighing :
Alleluia !

Epiphany

WEISS, JOHN (1818-1879).

A WONDROUS star our pioneer,
We left the mystic land
Where heaven-nurtured childhood slept,
Where yet old visions stand.

O God! the land of dreams we left,
Repose we left for aye,
And followed meekly to the place
Where our Redeemer lay.

That humble manger we have found;
The world his cradle is;
His life is hidden far below
Its sins and miseries.

The world throws wide its brazen gates,
With Thee to enter in;
Oh, grant us, in our humble sphere,
To free that world from sin.

The star is resting in the sky;
To worship Christ we came;
The moments haste; oh, touch our tongues
With thy celestial flame!

The truest worship is a life;
All dreaming we resign;
We lay our offerings at thy feet,
Our lives, O God, are thine.

A Christmas Carol

KINGSLEY, CHARLES (1819-1875).

I T chanced upon the merry merry Christmas Eve,
I went sighing past the church across the moor-
land dreary ;
“ Oh ! never sin and want and woe this earth will
leave,
And the bells but mock the wailing sound, they
sing so cheery.
How long, O Lord, how long before 'Thou come
again ?
Still in cellar, and in garret, and on moorland
dreary
The orphans moan, the widows weep, and poor
men toil in vain,
Till earth is sick of hope deferred, though Christ-
mas bells be cheery.”

Then arose a joyous clamour from the wild-fowl on
the mere,
Beneath the stars, across the snow, like clear bells
ringing,
And a voice within cried — “ Listen ! — Christmas
carols even here !
Though thou be dumb, yet o'er their work the
stars and snows are singing.
Blind ! I live, I love, I reign : and all the nations
through
With the thunder of my judgements even now
are ringing ;
Do thou fulfil thy work but as yon wild-fowl do,
Thou wilt heed no less the wailing, yet hear
through it angels singing.”

The Prince of Peace

LOWELL, JAMES RUSSELL (1819-1891).

"WHAT means this glory round our feet,"
The Magi mused, "more bright than
morn?"

And voices chanted clear and sweet,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

"What means that star," the shepherds said,
"That brightens through the rocky glen?"
And angels, answering overhead,
Sang, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

'Tis eighteen hundred years and more
Since those sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for Him like them of yore;
Alas! He seems so slow to come.

But they who to their childhood cling,
And keep their natures fresh as morn,
Once more shall hear the angels sing,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

But it was said, in words of gold
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold
In perfect trust to come to Him.

All round about our feet shall shine
A light like that the wise men saw,
If we our loving wills incline
To that sweet Life which is the Law.

So shall we learn to understand
The simple faith of shepherds then,
And clasping kindly hand in hand,
Sing "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

And they who do their souls no wrong,
But keep at eve the faith of morn,
Shall daily hear the angel-song,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"



Music on Christmas Morn

BRONTË, ANNE (1820-1849).

MUSIC I love—but never strain
Could kindle raptures so divine,
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,
And rouse this pensive heart of mine,
As that we hear on Christmas morn,
Upon the wintry breezes borne.

Though darkness still her empire keep,
And hours must pass, ere morning break;
From troubled dreams, or slumber deep,
That music kindly bids us wake;
It calls us with an angel's voice,
To wake, and worship, and rejoice;

To greet with joy the glorious morn,
Which angels welcomed long ago,
When our redeeming Lord was born,
To bring the light of Heaven below;
The powers of darkness to dispel,
And rescue earth from death and hell.

While listening to that sacred strain,
My raptured spirit soars on high;
I seem to hear those songs again
Resounding through the open sky,
That kindled such divine delight,
In those who watched their flocks by night.

The Poets on Christmas

With them I celebrate his birth—
 Glory to God in highest Heaven,
 Goodwill to men, and peace on earth,
 To us a Saviour-King is given ;
 Our God is come to claim his own,
 The enemy's power is overthrown !



Hymn for the Nativity

THRING, EDWARD (1821-1887).

HAPPY night and happy silence downward softly
 stealing,

Softly stealing over land and sea,
 Stars from golden censers swung a silent, eager
 feeling

Down on Judah, down on Galilee ;
 And all the wistful air, and earth, and sky,
 Listened, listened for the gladness of a cry.

Holy night, a sudden flash of light its way is
 winging ;

Angels, angels, all above, around ;
 Hark ! the angel voices, hark ! the angel voices
 singing ;

And the sheep are lying on the ground.
 Lo ! all the wistful air, and earth, and sky,
 Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Happy night at Bethlehem ; soft little hands are
 feeling,

Feeling in the manger with the kine :
 Little hands, and eyelids closed in sleep, while
 angels kneeling,

Mary mother, hymn the Babe Divine.
 Lo ! all the wistful air, and earth, and sky,
 Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Wide, as if the light were music, flashes adoration :
 "Glory be to God, nor ever cease."
 All the silence thrills, and speeds the message of
 salvation :

"Peace on earth, goodwill to men of peace."
 Lo ! all the wistful air, and earth, and sky,
 Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Praise Him, ye who watch the night, the silent
 night of ages :

Praise Him, shepherds, praise the Holy Child ;
 Praise Him, ye who hear the light, O praise Him,
 all ye sages ;

Praise Him, children, praise Him meek and mild.
 Lo ! peace on earth, glory to God on high !
 Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.



Veni, Veni, Emmanuel

GREENWELL, DORA (1821-1882).

AND art Thou come with us to dwell,
 Our Prince, our Guide, our Love, our Lord
 And is thy Name Emmanuel,
 God present with His world restored ?

The world is glad for Thee ! the rude
 Wild moor, the city's crowded pen ;
 Each waste, each peopled solitude,
 Becomes a home for happy men.

The heart is glad for Thee ! it knows
 None now shall bid it err or mourn ;
 And o'er its desert breaks the rose
 In triumph o'er the grieving thorn.

The Poets on Christmas

Thou bringest all again : with Thee
Is light, is space, is breadth, and room
For each thing fair, beloved, and free,
To have its home of life and bloom.

Each heart's deep instinct unconfessed,
Each lowly wish, each daring claim ;
All, all that life hath long repressed,
Unfolds, undreading praise or blame.

Thy reign eternal will not cease ;
Thy years are sure, and glad, and slow ;
Within thy mighty world of peace
The humblest flower hath leave to blow.

And with thy guiding hand we pierce
Life's labyrinth now no longer vain ;
The love that frees the universe
Hath made its broken story plain.

Then come to heal thy people's smart,
And with Thee bring thy captive train ;
Come, Saviour of the world and heart,
Come, mighty Victor over pain,

And let our earth's wild story cease
Its broken tale of wrong and tears ;
Come, Lord of Salem, Prince of Peace,
And bring again our vanished years.

The world is glad for Thee, the heart
Is glad for Thee ! and all is well,
And fixed and sure, because *Thou art*,
Whose name is called Emmanuel.

A Christmas Carol

GREENWELL, DORA (1821-1882).

IF ye would hear the angels sing
"Peace on earth and mercy mild,"
Think of Him who was once a child,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

If ye would hear the angels sing,
Christians! see ye let each door
Stand wider than it e'er stood before,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

*Rise, and open wide the door ;
Christians, rise ! the world is wide,
And many there be that stand outside,
Yet Christmas comes in the morning.*

If ye would hear the angels sing,
Rise, and spread your Christmas fare ;
'Tis merrier still the more that share,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

*Rise, and bake your Christmas bread ;
Christians, rise ! the world is bare,
And blank, and dark with want and care,
Yet Christmas comes in the morning.*

If ye would hear the angels sing,
Rise and light your Christmas fire ;
And see that ye pile the logs still higher,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

*Rise, and light your Christmas fire ;
Christians, rise ! the world is old,
And Time is weary, and worn, and cold,
Yet Christmas comes in the morning.*

If ye would hear the angels sing,
 Rise, and spice your wassail bowl
 With warmth for body, and heart, and soul,
 On Christmas Day in the morning.

*Spice it warm, and spice it strong,
 Christians, rise ! the world is grey,
 And rough is the road, and short is the day,
 Yet Christmas comes in the morning.*

If ye would hear the angels sing,
 Christians ! think on Him who died ;
 Think of your Lord, the crucified,
 On Christmas Day in the morning.

1863.



The Nativity

READ, THOMAS BUCHANAN (1822-1872).

THE air was still o'er Bethlehem's plain,
 As if the great night held its breath,
 When life eternal came to reign
 Over a world of death.

All nations felt a thrill divine
 When burnt that meteor on the night,
 Which, pointing to the Saviour's shrine,
 Proclaimed the new-born Light.

Light to the shepherds ! and the star
 Gilded their silent midnight fold ;
 Light to the wise men from afar
 Bearing their gifts of gold.

Light to a realm of sin and grief ;
 Light to a world in all its needs ;
 The Light of Life, a new belief,
 Rising o'er fallen creeds.

Light on a tangled path of thorns,
Though leading to a martyr's throne ;
A light to guide till Christ returns
In glory to his own.

Then still it shines, while far abroad
The Christmas choir sings now, as then,
"Glory, glory unto our God !
Peace and goodwill to men !"



A Christmas Carol

MACDONALD, GEORGE (1824-1905).

(Slightly altered.)

BABE Jesus lay in Mary's lap,
The sun shone in his hair ;
And this was how she saw, mayhap,
The crown already there.

She sang "Sleep on, my little King ;
Bad Herod dares not come ;
Before Thee sleeping, holy thing,
The wild winds would be dumb.

"I kiss thy hands, I kiss thy feet,
My Child, so long desired ;
Thy hands will ne'er be soiled, my sweet
Thy feet will ne'er be tired.

"For Thou art King of men, my Son ;
Thy crown I see it plain !
And men shall worship, every one,
And 'Glory !' cry, Amen !"

Babe Jesus opened wide his eyes.
At Mary looked her Lord.
The Mother ceased her song, and sighed ;
The Babe said ne'er a word.

Christmas Song of the Old Children

MACDONALD, GEORGE (1824-1905).

WELL for youth to seek the strong,
Beautiful, and brave!
We, the old, who walk along
Gently to the grave,
Only pay our court to Thee,
Child of all Eternity!

We are old who once were young,
And we grow more old;
Songs we are that have been sung
Tales that have been told;
Yellow leaves, wind-blown to Thee,
Childhood of Eternity!

If we come too sudden near,
Lo, earth's infant cries,
For our faces wan and drear
Have such withered eyes!
Thou, Heaven's child, turn'st not away
From the wrinkled ones who pray!

Smile upon us with thy mouth
And thine eyes of grace;
On our cold north breathe thy south,
Thaw the frozen face:
Childhood all from Thee doth flow—
Melt to song our age's snow.

Gray-haired children come in crowds,
Thee, their Hope, to greet:
Is it swaddling clothes or shrouds
Hampering so our feet?
Eldest Child, the shadows gloom:
Take the aged children home.

We have had enough of play,
 And the wood grows drear;
 Many who at break of day
 Companied us here—
 They have vanished out of sight,
 Gone to meet the coming light!
 Fair is this out-world of thine,
 But its nights are cold;
 And the sun that makes it fine
 Makes us soon so old!
 Long its shadows grow and dim—
 Father, take us back with him!



A Hymn for Christmas Morning

CRAIK, MRS., *née* DINAH MARIA MULOCK (1826-1887).

IT is the Christmas time:
 And up and down 'twixt heaven and earth,
 In glorious grief and solemn mirth,
 The shining angels climb.

And unto everything
 That lives and moves, for heaven, on earth,
 With equal share of grief and mirth,
 The shining angels sing:

“Babes new-born, undefiled,
 In lowly hut, or mansion wide,
 Sleep safely through this Christmas-tide
 When Jesus was a child.

“O young men, bold and free,
 In peopled town, or desert grim,
 Where ye are tempted like to Him,
 ‘The man Christ Jesus’ see.

"Poor mothers, with your hoard
Of endless love and countless pain,
Remember all her grief, her gain,
The Mother of our Lord.

"Mourners, half blind with woe,
Look up! One standeth in this place;
And by the pity of his face
'The Man of Sorrows' know.

"Wanderers in far countrie,
O think of Him who came, forgot,
To his own, who received Him not,
Jesus of Galilee.

"O all ye who have trod
The winepress of affliction, lay
Your hearts before *his* heart this day.
Behold the Christ of God!"

1855.



The First Waits

CRAIK, MRS., *née* DINAH MARIA MULOCK (1826-1887).

SO, Christmas is here again!
While the house sleeps, quiet as death,
'Neath the midnight moon come the waits' shrill
tune,
And we listen and hold our breath.

The Christmas that never was,
On this foggy November air,
With clear pale gleam, like the ghost of a dream,
It is painted everywhere.

The Christmas that might have been,
 It is borne on the far-off sound,
 Down the empty street, with its tread of feet
 That lie silent under ground.

The Christmas that yet may be,
 Like the Bethlehem Star, leads kind ;
 Yet our life slips past, hour-by-hour, fast, fast,
 Few before and many behind.

The Christmas we have and hold,
 With a tremulous, tender strain,
 Half joy, half fears—be the psalm of the years,
 "Grief passes, blessings remain !"

The Christmas that soon will come,
 Let us think of at fireside fair ;
 When church bells sound o'er one small green
 mound,
 Which the neighbours pass to prayer.

The Christmas that God will give,
 Long after all these are o'er,
 When is day nor night, for the Lamb is our light,
 And we live for evermore.

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❧

A Christmas Carol

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA (1830-1894).

IN the bleak mid-winter
 Frosty wind made moan,
 Earth stood hard as iron,
 Water like a stone ;
 Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
 Snow on snow,
 In the bleak mid-winter
 Long ago.

The Poets on Christmas

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him,
Nor earth sustain ;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign :
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay ;
Enough for Him, whom angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air ;
But only his mother
In her maiden bliss
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am ?
If I were a shepherd
I could bring a lamb ;
If I were a wise man
I could do my part ;
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart.

Christmas Eve

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA (1830-1894).

CHRISTMAS hath a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness
Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show :
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Earth strike up your music,
Birds that sing and bells that ring ;
Heaven hath answering music
For all angels soon to sing :
Earth put on your whitest
Bridal robe of spotless snow :
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.



A Christmas Carol

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA (1830-1894).

THANK God, thank God, we do believe :
Thank God that this is Christmas eve.
Even as we kneel upon this day,
Even so, the ancient legends say,
Nearly two thousand years ago
The stalled ox knelt, and even so
The ass knelt full of praise, which they
Could not express, while we can pray.

Thank God, thank God, for Christ was born
 Ages ago, as on this morn.
 In the snow-season undefiled
 God came to earth a little Child :
 He put his ancient glory by,
 To live for us, and then to die.

How shall we thank God? How shall we
 Thank Him and praise Him worthily?
 What will He have who loved us thus?
 What presents will He take from us?
 Will He take gold, or precious heap
 Of gems? or shall we rather steep
 The air with incense, or bring myrrh?
 What man will be our messenger
 To go to Him, and ask his will?
 Which having learned we will fulfil
 Though He choose all we most prefer:
 What man will be our messenger?

Thank God, thank God, the man is found,
 Sure-footed, knowing well the ground.
 He knows the road, for this the way
 He travelled once, as on this day.
 He is our Messenger beside,
 He is our door, and path, and guide,
 He also is our offering :
 He is the gift that we must bring.
 Let us kneel down with one accord
 And render thanks unto the Lord :
 For unto us a child is born
 Upon this happy Christmas morn ;
 For unto us a Son is given,
 First-born of God, and heir of Heaven.

1849.



Christmastide

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA (1830-1894).

LOVE came down at Christmas,
 Love all lovely, Love divine ;
 Love was born at Christmas,
 Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
 Love incarnate, Love divine ;
 Worship we our Jesus :
 But wherewith for sacred sign ?

Love shall be our token,
 Love be yours and love be mine,
 Love to God and all men,
 Love for plea and gift and sign.



“Outlanders, whence come ye last?”

MORRIS, WILLIAM (1834-1896).

OUTLANDERS, whence come ye last?
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

Through what green sea and great have ye past?
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

From far away, O masters mine,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

We come to bear you goodly wine :
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

From far away we come to you,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

To tell of great tidings strange and true :
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News, news of the Trinity,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

And Mary and Joseph from over the sea :

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

For as we wandered far and wide,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

What hap do ye deem there should us betide ?

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

Under a bent when the night was deep,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

There lay three shepherds tending their sheep :

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“ O ye shepherds, what have ye seen,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

To slay your sorrow and heal your teen ? ”

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“ In an ox-stall this night we saw,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

A Babe and a maid without a flaw.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“ There was an old man there beside,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

His hair was white, and his hood was wide.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“ And as we gazed this thing upon,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

Those twain knelt down to the little One.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“ And a marvellous song we straight did hear,

The snow in the street and the wind on the door.

That slew our sorrow and healed our care.”

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News of a fair and a marvellous thing,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
 Nowell, nowell, nowell, we sing!
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.



A Christmas Carol

DAVIES, WILLIAM (1834-1895).

'TWAS Christmas Eve, and the old minster clock
 Had scarcely clanged a muffled twelve and
 ceased,

With dull vibration humming through the stone,
 Crochet and finial struggling towards the sky,
 And lost itself and found itself, and ceased,
 As I lay wakeful on the verge of sleep.
 Now saw the moonbeams on the wall, and now
 Lost will and motion in enchanted dreams,
 When a rare strain came floating down the street,
 Tender and low as though soft snow-flakes fell
 On snow-flakes, making music: thus it ran.

When underneath the night the swelling plains
 Of Bethlehem lay dumb from rein to rein—
 Shine on us from thy radiant realms afar!

The watching shepherds with mysterious awe
 First saw thee fill the heavens with light and sang:
 Shine on us from thy radiant realms afar!

And angel-voices fell: Glory to God
 In the highest: on earth peace: goodwill toward
 men.
 Shine on us from thy radiant realms afar!

Still be our pilot to the Just and True ;
 And lead us to the Christ we love and seek.
 Shine on us from thy radiant realms afar !

And let his love be on us, blessing all ;
 And grant us charity to feel for all.
 Shine on us from thy radiant realms afar !

So may the great Good Shepherd gather us,
 One fold in bliss and glory, light and love.
 Shine on us from thy radiant realms afar !

York, Christmas, 1860.



“O little town of Bethlehem”

BROOKS, BISHOP PHILLIPS (1835-1893).

O LITTLE town of Bethlehem,
 How still we see thee lie !
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,
 The silent stars go by ;
 Yet in thy dark streets shineth
 The everlasting light ;
 The hopes and fears of all the years
 Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary :
 And gathered all above,
 While mortals sleep, the angels keep
 Their watch of wondering love.
 O morning stars ! together
 Proclaim the holy birth,
 And praises sing to God the King,
 And peace to men on earth.

How silently ! how silently !
The wondrous gift is given ;
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming ;
But in our world of sin,
When meek souls will receive Him, still
The dear Christ enters in.



“As with gladness men of old”

DIX, WILLIAM CHATTERTON (1837-1898).

AS with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold ;
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright ;
So, most gracious God, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.

As with joyful steps they sped
To that lowly manger-bed ;
There to bend the knee before
Him whom heaven and earth adore ;
So may we, with willing feet,
Ever seek thy mercy-seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare ;
So may we with holy joy,
Pure, and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.

The Poets on Christmas

Holy Jesus ! every day
 Keep us in the narrow way ;
 And, when earthly things are past,
 Bring our ransomed souls at last
 Where they need no star to guide,
 Where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
 Need they no created light ;
 Thou its Light, its Joy, its Crown,
 Thou its Sun, which goes not down ;
 There for ever may we sing
 Alleluias to our King.

1860.



A Carol

DIX, WILLIAM CHATTERTON (1837-1898).

CHRISTIANS, carol sweetly,
 Up to-day, and sing !
 'Tis the happy birthday
 Of our holy King !
 Haste we then to greet Him,
 Humbly falling down,
 While our hands entwine Him,
 Dearest Babe, a crown !

Crowds of snow-white angels
 Throng the golden stair ;
 All things are delightful,
 All things passing fair ;
 Bells clear music making,
 Peal the news to earth ;
 Chimes within make answer,
 All is glee and mirth.

Michael, at the manger,
 Bows his royal face ;
 Gabriel, with the lily,
 Hides transcendent grace ;
 For, dear friends, the glory
 Of that lowly bed
 Overpowers the beauty
 On archangels shed.
 Shall I tell of Joseph,
 Who, with rapt surprise,
 Sees the light of Godhead
 Fill those infant eyes ?
 Shall I sing of Mary,
 Who upon her breast
 Cradles her Creator,
 Soothes Him to his rest ?
 Angels, Mary, Joseph,
 Yes, I greet you all !
 Falling down in worship
 At the manger stall !
 For you hail our Monarch,
 Born a child to-day ;
 So with you I worship,
 And my homage pay.



A Christmas Lullaby

SYMONDS, JOHN ADDINGTON (1840-1893).

SLEEP, Baby, sleep ! the Mother sings :
 Heaven's angels kneel and fold their wings :
 Sleep, Baby, sleep !

With swathes of scented hay thy bed
 By Mary's hand at eve was spread.
 Sleep, Baby, sleep !

The Poets on Christmas

At midnight came the shepherds, they
Whom seraphs wakened by the way.

Sleep, Baby, sleep!

And three kings from the East afar
Ere dawn came guided by thy star.

Sleep, Baby, sleep!

They brought Thee gifts of gold and gems,
Pure orient pearls, rich diadems.

Sleep, Baby, sleep!

But Thou who liest slumbering there,
Art King of kings, earth, ocean, air.

Sleep, Baby, sleep!

Sleep, Baby, sleep! the shepherds sing:
Through heaven, through earth, hosannas ring.

Sleep, Baby, sleep!



Christmas Day

HOSMER, FREDERICK L. (1840-).

TO-DAY be joy in every heart,
For lo! the angel throng
Once more above the listening earth
Repeats the advent song:

"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men!"
Before us goes the star
That leads us on to holier births,
And life diviner far!

Ye men of strife forget to-day
Your harshness and your hate;
Too long ye stay the promised years
For which the nations wait!

And ye upon the tented field,
 Sheathe, sheathe to-day the sword!
 By love, and not by might, shall come
 The kingdom of the Lord.

O Star of human faith and hope!
 Thy light shall lead us on,
 Until it fades in morning's glow,
 And heaven on earth is won.



Christmas-Eve Chant of the Breton Peasants

REDDEN, LAURA C. (1840-).

IT was a dim, delicious night;
 The earth, close wrapt in ermined white,
 Lay languid in the misty light.
 The circling spheres were all in tune,
 And, in their midst, the empress moon
 Was brightening to her highest noon.
 It was the night when Bethlehem's star
 Guided the sages from afar.
 It was the night when shepherds heard
 The reverent air by music stirred.
 It was the night of old renown,
 When wondering angel-eyes looked down,
 To see Christ's head, bare of its crown,
 Within the manger laid!

.

There is a sound of thronging feet,
 What youthful crowds are in the street!
 They go out from the stifling town,
 They seek the white and lovely down;

The Poets on Christmas

They walk in silence, till they find
A spot where four roads straightly wind,
Where four roads meet, about a place
Made sacred by the cross's grace.
Then men and maids in separate file
Do range themselves, nor speak the while,
Nor break the charm by jest or smile,
Till sudden breaks upon the air
A sound of singing, strong and clear.
Thus chant the hardy Breton youths :

“What is new upon the earth?
What fresh wonder goeth forth,
That its ways are full of pilgrims
And its dwellings full of mirth?

“Sounds of gladness in the air!
Happy faces everywhere!
Tell us, O ye silent virgins!
Wherefore is the night so fair?”

Then silver-soft, the girlish voices rise,
And with the sweetness of their meek replies
Upon the frosty air breed melodies :

“Lo! the sacred hour is near!
What was darkened now is clear.
Christ is coming! raise your voices,
Say farewell to doubt and fear!”

Resounding through the darkness then,
Peal the deep voices of the men,
Who raise the solemn song again :

“Why is all the world abroad,
Raising midnight prayers to God,
Till the censored air is heavy
With its supplicating load?”

Then, clearer, purer, richer, rise
The hidden maidens' sweet replies,
Like wonders out of mysteries :

“Lo, the Prince of Peace is born !

Lo, on high the star of morn !

And it shall not fade for ever,

Nor its brilliancy be shorn.”

Then in concord perfect, sweet,
Tones of youths and maidens meet ;
And they gladly sing together,
This auspicious hour to greet :

“Sing to-night, for Christ is born !

Lo, on high the star of morn !

And it shall not fade for ever,

Nor its brilliancy be shorn.

“Sing ! because it is his feast ;

Join the princes of the East,

Bring Him gifts amid rejoicing,

He will smile upon the least !

“Sing ! while Christmas crowns ye weave ;

On the cross a garland leave.

Lo, the world's one Virgin-Mother

Heals the hurt that came of Eve.”



“Silent and soft, the first faint gleam
of day”

BLATCHFORD, AMBROS E N. (1842—).

SILENT and soft, the first faint gleam of day
Stole o'er a sleeping world, when shepherds lay
Watching their flocks in Judah through the night,
While round them glimmered still the pale starlight :
How fresh a glory lit the rising morn,
The hour was come ! The Son of Man was born !

Once more across the hoary fields of time
 Floats like some distant sound of matin chime,
 That angel-hymn of "Glory to the Lord,
 And peace to men on earth," in sweet accord;
 And on our pilgrimage, at times so drear,
 We rest awhile that strain again to hear.

O'er land and sea, where Christmas bells may ring,
 Let mortal grief no darkening shadow fling;
 Care take its load from hearts and homes of love,
 And life below grow more like life above.
 Let the whole world of woe, and want, and pain,
 Beneath this day's sweet life revive again.

Grant that with souls renewed our way we take,
 And see thy light of love through trials break!
 Lord! lead us on! Help us by staff or rod,
 And make our path of toil the road to God.
 Tell us, this day, thy mercy waits on all,
 As on that Infant Child in manger stall.

Welcome the songs, this hour, to heaven that rise,
 Welcome the mercy falling from the skies!
 Blest be that glorious Prince of Peace who came!
 Hallowed his life! Immortal be his name!
 Glory to God for that belovèd Son,
 Who conquered death, and heaven on earth begun.



Ring the Bells¹

LINDSAY, LADY

RING the bells,
 Ring the bells,
 Ring the merry Christmas bells;
 And let their voice resound
 Around, around,

¹ This and the two following poems are from *A Christmas Posy*, 1902.

'Till o'er the leas and o'er the fells
 The gladsome echo loudly tells
 How we to-day
 Are blithe and gay,
 And how for all sad hearts we pray.
 Ring the bells,
 Ring the bells,
 Ring the joyful Christmas bells!
 Ring the bells,
 Ring the bells,
 Ring the merry Christmas bells.
 So ring them high and low,
 O'er ice and snow,
 O'er craggèd hills and silent dells,
 While round the earth the message swells
 How we to-day
 Are blithe and gay,
 And how for all sad hearts we pray.
 Ring the bells,
 Ring the bells,
 Ring the joyful Christmas bells!



A Christmas Fancy

LINDSAY, LADY

THERE dwelt a little sprite
 In a belfry high,
 Up close to the sky,
 And there, by day and night,
 He heard the big bells clang with ever-new delight.
 He was a shrewish thing,
 On mischief bent
 With wild intent;
 He loved the bells to ring,
 But mostly was he glad discord and dread to bring.

The Poets on Christmas

At times there passed a sound
Of melody faint,
As though a saint
Sang low—folks stood spellbound,
Then on a sudden gasped, for silence reigned around.

Yet, when in church there pealed
The organ loud,
And the reverent crowd
Hymned praise, or meekly kneeled—
Down came a hideous din, as though fiends fought
and skreeled.

It was the elf, no doubt—
So wise men said,
With shake of head ;
And maids scarce ventured out
When storm-winds crossed the plain, lest ill should
come about.

And far away at sea,
In evening late,
The mariner's fate
Wailed itself plaintively
From that same belfry tower girt by an ivy tree.

And children screamed for naught ;
And peaceful men,
Now and again,
Heard battle-sounds loud fraught
With stirring trumpet-calls, and left their homes dis-
traught.

Thus homely folks were dazed ;
And all the while,
With wicked smile,
The sprite peered down half-crazed,
Because of joy to make this silly world amazed.

Only on Christmas morn—
Aye, once a year—
He bent his ear
And shrank back all forlorn,
While o'er the vales the bells' sweet carolling was
borne.

At every Christmas-tide
He was undone :
His power right gone.
When peace on earth doth stay,
'Tis angels ring the bells—the peasant people say.



Christmas, prithee

LINDSAY, LADY

CHRISTMAS, prithee, be thou drest
In thy best—
Snowy wimple, snowy gown—
Laying down
Flooring pure and white, to greet
Jesu's feet.

Gloria in Excelsis.

Bid thy frosty handmaids bear
Through the air
Cloth of silver for thy veil
Clear and frail,
While the robins welcome sing
To thy King.

Gloria in Excelsis.

The Poets on Christmas

Angels o'er thy radiant brow
 Leaning low,
 Joyous, carol once again
 Sweet refrain,
 Seeing our dark earth so fair :
*"Peace be there,
 Gloria in Excelsis."*



A Christmas Wish

SHUTTLEWORTH, HENRY CARY¹ (1850-1900).

IF in thy dreams some vision haunt thy way,
 If in thy heart some hidden hope abide,
 Too deep, too dear, to live in common day,
 God give thee joy of it, this happy tide.

If in thy prayer some keener sense awaking,
 Show thee glad angels on life's dark hill-side,
 Tell thee the Christ is born, the bright day breaking,
 God grant thee grace of it, this holy tide.

1890.



The Legend of the Christmas Rose

SHUTTLEWORTH, HENRY CARY¹ (1850-1900).

AMURMURING of many wings
 Was in the wondering air,
 An echo as of one that sings
 Far up a heavenward stair ;

For the angels of the Holy Night
 Bowed over Bethlehem ;
 The shepherds, through the pale starlight,
 Hasted to kneel to them.

¹ From *Poems and Hymns* (the Priory Press), 1907.

A maiden wept at the stable-shrine,
That never a gift she bears ;
"Nor fleece nor flower for the Babe is mine,
I have naught save love and tears."

Then the Herald of the Holy Night
Stooped down, and kissed her eyes ;
Lo ! the fields were aflame with the red and white
Of roses of Paradise.

She laid them pure on the Babe's pure breast,
She wreathed them about his bed,
Till the humble manger stood confest
God's rose-garden, white and red.

Still this poor earth, 'mid winter snows,
With blossom of heaven is bright,
For the maiden's gift was the Christmas rose
The flower of the Holy Night.

Still oft, when the world is wintry and bare,
When we weep for the hopes we miss,
The sound of a going is in the air,
On our eyes an angel's kiss ;

And life's dim dark is touched with light,
Heaven breaks over land and sea ;
God send from his height, this Holy Night,
A Christmas rose for thee.

1893.



Bethlehem

SHUTTLEWORTH, HENRY CARY¹ (1850-1900).

NIGHT wind soft sighing,
 Faint echoes dying,
 On hills low-lying
 By Bethlehem.
 As wings that hover
 Earth's hope to cover,
 Darkness broods over
 Thee, Bethlehem.

Let there be light! He said;
 Born of the manger-bed,
 Through the world's night it sped
 From Bethlehem:
 Never dawn's lightening
 O'er the east whitening,
 Brake like that brightening
 Of Bethlehem.

In shadow holden
 Lies yet unfolden
 Life's treasure golden
 Our Bethlehem.
 Lo! the light breaking,
 Dawn-angels waking,
 Christmas morn making
 Earth Bethlehem.

1894.

¹ From *Poems and Hymns*, 1907.

Christmas Day, 1901

RAWNSLEY, CANON HARDWICKE DRUMMOND

(1850-).

RING out your Christmas music to the fells,
 Though blood-drops hang on every holly tree,
 Though loud as passionate wind and surging sea,
 The air is full of hatred that foretells
 The havoc of the nations. Hark ! it swells
 Fierce and now fiercer—wolf-notes of jealousy,
 Mixed with the cry of Mammon's maddening
 glee—

Wherefore, ring on, ye undisheartened bells !

For surely never would have come from Heaven
 A helpless Babe to mend a world forlorn,
 If love were not disguised for slow increase :
 To us no full-grown Saviour Lord was born,
 To us, as on this day, a Babe was given :
 We crown with hope an Infant Prince of Peace.



A Christmas Message, 1902

RAWNSLEY, CANON HARDWICKE DRUMMOND

(1850-).

THERE is no work, the wolf is at the door,
 The thousands in our cities cry forlorn,
 "Those bells but mock with tale of Christmas
 morn ;
 No Saviour comes from heaven our want to cure !"
 Nay, but his fan shall thoroughly purge his floor,
 To-day He winnows chaff from honest corn ;
 The Bread of all the world again is born,
 And bids us dare for brotherhood be poor.

Ah! what avails our chanted hymns, and prayer,
 Our green-wreathed churches and our altar rites,
 If love of human kind no offering make?
 Through heat of noon, through cold of star-lit
 nights
 The wise men came with gifts for Jesu's sake.
 Give thou thy heart, thyself with all men share.



A Christmas Fancy

MURRAY, ROBERT (1863-1894).

EARLY on Christmas Day,
 Love, as awake I lay,
 And heard the Christmas bells ring sweet and
 clearly,
 My heart stole through the gloom
 Into your silent room,
 And whispered to your heart, "I love you dearly."

Then, in the dark profound,
 Your heart was sleeping sound,
 And dreaming some fair dream of summer weather.
 At my heart's word it woke,
 And, ere the morning broke,
 They sang a Christmas carol both together.

Glory to God on high!
 Stars of the morning sky,
 Sing as ye sang upon the first creation,
 When all the sons of God
 Shouted for joy abroad,
 And earth was laid upon a sure foundation.

Glory to God again!
Peace and goodwill to man,
And kindly feeling all the wide world over,
When friends with joy and mirth
Meet round the Christmas hearth,
Or dream of home the solitary rover.

Glory to God! True hearts,
Lo, now the dark departs,
And morning on the snow-clad hills grows grey.
Oh, may love's dawning light
Kindled from loveless night,
Shine more and more unto the perfect day



APPENDIX



“**○ Wonderful ! round whose birth=hour ”**

ALEXANDER, ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM (1824-).

○ WONDERFUL ! round whose birth-hour
Prophetic song, miraculous power,
Cluster and turn like star and flower.

Those marvellous rays that at thy will,
From the closed heaven which is so still,
So passionless streamed round Thee still,

Are but as broken gleams that start,
O Light of lights, from thy deep heart :
Thyself, Thyself, the wonder art !

O Counsellor ! four thousand years,
One question, tremulous with tears,
One awful question vexed our peers.

They asked the vault, but no one spoke ;
They asked the depth, no answer woke ;
They asked their hearts, they only broke.

.

O everlasting Father, God !
Sun after sun went down, and trod
Race after race the green earth's sod,

Till generations seemed to be
But dead waves of an endless sea,
But dead leaves from a deathless tree.

But Thou hast come, and now we know
Each wave hath an eternal flow,
Each leaf a lifetime after snow.

O Prince of Peace! crowned, yet discrowned,
They say no war or battle's sound
Was heard the tired world around;

They say the hour that Thou didst come
The trumpet's voice was stricken dumb,
And no one beat the battle drum.

.

And still as clouding questions swarm
Around our hearts, and dimly form
Their problems of the mist and storm;

And still as ages fleet, but fraught
With syllables, whereby is wrought
The fullness of the eternal thought;

And when not yet in God's sunshine,
The smoke drifts from th' embattled line
Of warring hearts that would be thine;

We bid our doubts and passions cease,
Our restless fears be stilled with these,—
Counsellor, Father, Prince of Peace.



“Christ is born of Maiden fair”

ANONYMOUS.

CHRIST is born of Maiden fair.
Hark the heralds in the air,
God adoring, praise Him there,
“In excelsis gloria.”

Shepherds saw those angels bright
Carolling in glorious light,
“Christ the Lord is born to-night,
In excelsis gloria.”

Christ is come to bless mankind,
As in holy page we find,
Therefore, this song bear in mind,
“In excelsis gloria.”



A Christmas Carol

ANONYMOUS.

HARK ! a burst of heavenly music,
From a band of seraphs bright
Suddenly to earth descending,
In the calm and silent night :

To the shepherds of Judea,
Watching in the earliest morn,
Lo, they bear the joyful tidings,
Jesus, Prince of Peace, is born.

Sweet and clear these angel voices,
Echoing through the starry sky,
As they chant the heavenly chorus,
“Glory be to God on high.”

And this joyful Christmas morning
Breaking o'er the world below,
Tells again the wondrous story
Shepherds heard so long ago.

Hark ! we hear again the chorus,
Ringing through the starry sky ;
And we join the blessèd anthem,
"Glory be to God on high."



A Christmas Carol

ANONYMOUS.

GOD rest you, noble gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

In Bethlehem in Jewry,
This blessèd Babe was born,
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessèd morn ;
The which, His mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn
O tidings, &c.

The Poets on Christmas

From God, our heavenly Father,
A blessèd angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.
O tidings, &c.

Fear not, then said the angel,
Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour
Of virtue, power, and might,
So frequently to vanquish all
The fiends of Satan quite.
O tidings, &c.

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoicèd much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding,
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway
This blessèd Babe to find.
O tidings, &c.

And when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereas this Infant lay,
They found Him in a manger
Where oxen feed on hay ;
His mother, Mary, kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray.
O tidings, &c.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace ;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.
O tidings, &c.

The Same

Modernized by MRS. CRAIK (*née* DINAH MARIA MULOCK)
(1826-1887).

GOD rest ye merry, gentlemen ; let nothing you
dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christ-
mas Day.

The dawn rose red o'er Bethlehem, the stars shone
through the grey,
When Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christ-
mas Day.

God rest ye, little children ; let nothing you affright,
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour, was born this happy
night ;

Along the hills of Galilee the white flocks sleeping
lay,
When Christ, the Child of Nazareth, was born on
Christmas Day.

God rest ye, all good Christians ; upon this blessed
morn

The Lord of all good Christians was of a woman
born ;

Now all your sorrows He doth heal, your sins He
takes away ;

For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christ-
mas Day.



A Christmas Sonnet

DEANE, ANTHONY (1870-).

NOT ours to echo that exultant mirth
 Which rang through the astonished firmament,
 Till by its power the shadowing veil was rent
 Which hid celestial glory from the earth;
 Nor to our harmonies, so little worth,
 May we attune the song by angels sent,
 Which trembling constellations heard, intent
 To know the revelation of the Birth.

Ah, of that melody the soul despairs!
 Yet Thou, all-pitiful, will not condemn,
 Us who, forsaking our insistent cares,
 Would speed with shepherd-folk to Bethlehem,
 Would reverence the manger-shrine with them,
 Joining our praise, our faltering praise to theirs!

1903.



"Come, little Child"

DRAPER, W. H. (1855-).

COME, little Child,
 Through the gate of birth
 To the time-worn earth,
 In the winter wild,
 To the sin-defiled,
 Come, little Child.

Come, fresh and fair,
In thy gentle ruth
Full of grace and truth,
To the bowed with care
In their old despair;
Come, fresh and fair.

Come, Prince of Peace,
To the hearts that burn,
And with longing turn
Where their troubles cease,
Where thy joys increase,
Sweet Prince of Peace.



The Prince of Peace

DRAPER, W. H. (1855-).

HUSH, all ye sounds of war,
Ye nations all be still,
A voice of heavenly joy
Steals over vale and hill,
O hear the angels sing
The captive world's release,
This day is born in Bethlehem
The Prince of Peace.

No more divided be,
Ye families of men,
Old enmity forget,
Old friendship knit again,
In the new year of God
Let brothers' love increase,
This day is born in Bethlehem
The Prince of Peace.

The Poets on Christmas

Thou heart of man, where all
 His hate and feuds are born,
 By lust and passion lashed,
 By wrath and fury torn,
 O let thine inward rage
 Thy civil tumult, cease,
 This day is born in Bethlehem
 The Prince of Peace.



Christmas at Cairo

DRAPER, W. H. (1855-).

HERE all goes on as if his name
 The city scarcely knew,
 Its tide of business flows the same,
 No sign of Him in view.

Yet as I walk the busy street,
 So secular and strange,
 The very stones beneath my feet
 Dissolve away and change ;

The buildings and the men around
 Dim and unreal seem,
 And on the breeze there comes a sound
 Of bells, as in a dream.

Familiar faces meet my eye,
 Friends smile to me and speak,
 As through the village they and I
 The old stone portal seek.

And borne upon the Spirit's wing
 I kneel on Christian earth,
 And hear the Christmas Hymn they sing
 In church at Kenilworth

“When Christ was born of Mary free”

(From a MS. in the British Museum).

WHEN Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem that fair citie,
Angels sang with mirth and glee
In Excelsis gloria!

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright
To them appearing with great light,
And said, God's Son is born this night,
In Excelsis gloria!

The King is come to save kinde¹,
As in Scripture so we finde,
Therefore this song have we in minde
In Excelsis gloria!

Then, Lord, for thy great grace
Grant us the bliss to see thy face,
Where we may sing to Thee solace,
In Excelsis gloria!



Christmas Sunrise

HINDS, SAMUEL, BISHOP OF NORWICH (1793-1872).

O THAT yon sun could tell to me
The sight his lustrous eye did see
In Bethl'em, on that blessèd morn
When unto us a Child was born!
Bethl'em and Bethl'emite are gone;
Thou silent witness, thou alone
Survivest, tell thou unto me
'Thy tale of the Nativity.

¹ Mankind.

Here to thy dawn I come to gaze,
 And hail each ray that faintly strays
 Through mist and cloud, and think how they
 Thus o'er the sleeping Babe might stray,
 Entwined with rays of glory shed
 From angels' wings about his bed,
 Emblem and shadow of light given
 By that same Child, the light of Heaven.

O Thou who once in childhood's guise
 Didst show Thyself to mortal eyes,
 Bless us, too, Lord ; give us, we pray,
 The power to see thy natal day,
 By faith ; that better sight to see,
 And feel the glorious mystery.



Christmas Vesper Hymn

HUGHES, J. C. (1832—c. 1887).

DEPART awhile, each thought of care ;
 Be earthly things forgotten all ;
 And speak, my soul, thy vesper prayer,
 Obedient to that sacred call.
 For hark ! the pealing chorus swells ;
 Devotion chants the hymn of praise,
 And now of joy and hope it tells,
 Till fainting on the ear, it says,
 Gloria tibi, Domine !
 Domine, Domine !

Thine, wondrous Babe of Galilee !
 Fond theme of David's harp and song,
 Thine are the notes of minstrelsy ;
 To Thee its ransomed chords belong,

And hark ! again the chorus swells,
 The song is wafted on the breeze,
 And to the listening earth it tells,
 In accents soft and sweet as these,

Gloria tibi, Domine !

Domine, Domine !

My heart doth feel that still He's near
 To meet the soul in hours like this,
 Else why, oh, why that falling tear,
 When all is peace, and love, and bliss ?
 But hark ! that pealing chorus swells

Anew its thrilling vesper strain,
 And still of Joy and Hope it tells,
 And bids Creation sing again,

Gloria tibi, Domine !

Domine, Domine !



Carol

JEWITT, A. C. (-).

○ HARPS of gold ! O voices of the air !
 O light of God, that gleamed with radiant glow
 Upon the rugged hillside, bleak and bare,
 Where shepherds watched their flocks long, long
 ago.

.

Where shepherds watched their flocks long, long ago,
 God's lamps looked down upon them as they lay,
 And, like his spirit, speaking soft and low,
 The wandering wind went whispering on its way.

The Poets on Christmas

The wandering wind went whispering on its way.
 Then all around them broke a wondrous sight,
 And brighter than the dawning of the day,
 The glory of the Lord lit up the night.

The glory of the Lord lit up the night,
 And angel forms, far fairer than the morn,
 Clad in white raiment, and enrobed in light,
 Sang sweetly of a shepherd newly born.

Sang sweetly of a shepherd newly born,
 And ever still the burden of the song
 Was peace—O word of welcome to the worn!—
 That peace, for which the world had waited long.

That peace for which the world had waited long,
 That peace so slow to come, so long foretold;
 For still, while right lies crushed beneath the wrong,
 We watch and wait, as in the days of old.

We watch and wait, as in the days of old,
 To pierce the gloom our weary sight we strain,
 Shine, light that lit the shepherds by the fold!
 Light of the world, shine on the earth again!

.



Christmas

JOHNSON, LIONEL¹ (1867-1902).

CHRIST, hath Christ's mother
Dicamus! Canamus!
 Borne our dear Brother,
Canamus! Dicamus!
 In the stall of Bethlehem.

¹ From *Ireland with other Poems* (1897).

Then leave we all Jerusalem,
To kiss the King of Bethlehem :

Cui vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

Come from the city !

Dicamus ! Canamus !

God hath had pity

Canamus ! Dicamus !

On His people Israel.

And pity will He have as well

On Gentiles beyond Israel :

Nunc vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

Laud in the highest !

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Now, Death, thou diest :

Canamus ! Dicamus !

Lo ! God goeth to His grave

Us dead and dying men to save,

And bring the captives from the grave :

Quo vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

Snows the land cover :

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Lo ! comes our Lover :

Canamus ! Dicamus !

Comes a glory, comes a light :

Gold on snow and in the height

Glory from the Light of Light !

Quin vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

The Poets on Christmas

Praise to the Father !

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Now will He gather

Canamus ! Dicamus !

Us His helpless little ones

From endless Death's dominions

Us, God the Father's little ones

Cui vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

Praise to Son Jesus !

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Him, whose Cross frees us

Canamus ! Dicamus !

From the cruel hand of sin.

Now first to Him our songs begin,

Since now our hearts have done with sin.

Sic vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

Praise Mary Mother !

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Mary, none other

Canamus ! Dicamus !

Welcome might the Holy Ghost

Because her soul was pure the most ;

Now praise be to the Holy Ghost !

Cui vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

Praise, praise and praises,

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Earth with Heaven raises

Canamus ! Dicamus !

To the glorious Trinity !
 Sons of new morning, mingle we
 With morning stars our melody :

Et vocibus gaudentibus

Dicamus ! Canamus !

Gloriam.

1888.



Immanuel

KIMBALL, HARRIET I. C. MCEWAN (—).

RING, sweet bells of Christendom,
 Everywhere the tidings tell
 How the Lord to earth did come,
 Ring and tell.

Prince of Peace, the heavenly King,
 As a mortal Babe disguised
 He appeared whom angels sing,
 Earth-disguised.

Love divine in human frame,
 Of the lowly, lowliest He ;
 Stript of glory, in his shame
 Gloried He.

Empty-handed from his birth
 Gifts exceeding price He brought
 Treasures hidden not in earth
 Jesus brought.

To the blind unclouded sight ;
 To the dumb the voice of praise ;
 And to all in darkness light,
 Joy, and praise.

The Poets on Christmas

To the heavy-laden, rest ;
 To the mourner, words of life ;
 And to all, the last and best,
 Endless life.

Ring, sweet bells of Christendom,
 Far and near the tidings tell
 How the Lord to earth did come,
 Ring and tell.

Still the Christmas angels sing :
 "Glory be to God most high !"
 The eternal echoes ring ;
 "God most high !"

Lift your songs in unison ;
 "Peace on earth, goodwill to men !"
 Mingle song and life in one
 Wide "Amen."



A little Christmas Sermon

KIMBALL, HARRIET I. C. MCEWAN (' -).

CHILDREN dear, I heard ye say :
 "Morrows haste and haste away ;
 Bring the merry Christmas Day !"

.

Ponder what the carols mean ;
 What the chime rung out between,
 What the laden evergreen.

"Glory be to God most high !"
 Sang his angels in the sky
 When the Lord to men drew nigh.

"Peace on earth,—goodwill and peace :
Love shall reign, and wrong shall cease ;
He is born,—the Prince of Peace !"

.

This is love : to do his will ;
Speaking truth ; forsaking ill ;
Bearing and forbearing still ;

Sorrowing over evil wrought,
Open deed, or secret thought ;
Straightway doing as ye ought ;

Blessing all for his dear sake,
As his blessing ye partake ;
Happier, thus, his world to make.

Let your little hearts reply
To the angels in the sky ;
"Love shall reign eternally !

"God is love for evermore ;
Love we Him, and Him adore
In the Christ-child born of yore."

Let your lives ring out his praise
Like a chime his finger sways ;
Sweet as carols be your days.

.

This is what the carols mean ;
What the chime rang clear between
What the bounteous evergreen.



The Christmas for America

KNOWLES, FREDERIC LAWRENCE (-).

I HEAR no angels in the skies,
I hear the toiler mourn his lot,
I catch a thousand mingled cries :
"Fate rules," "God is," and "God is not."

I see no hillsides grey with sheep,
I meet no Magi on the road ;
I see the crippled beggar creep,
Striving to stand beneath his load.

O Nazareth carpenter who cursed
The pride and avarice of thy day,
We would observe thy birth, but first
Thy Sermon on the Mount obey.

If Thou shouldst come once more to men
In this, the later Promised Land,
Would not thy great heart break again
To find these wrongs on every hand :

Labour, heart-smitten, left to die,
Beneath the feet of conquest hurled,
Or, lifting hatred's torch on high,
Wreaking revenge upon the world ?

O galaxy of virgin States,
White constellation of all time !
What blackness as of Death awaits
If these pure stars grow dark with crime !

I have no Holy Land but thee,
 Nation whose hills and prairies wait
 The new, the last Nativity,
 That Justice which shall make us great!

Though Freedom's eagle bleeds, he still
 Soars from his eyrie toward the sun,
 May his torn wings gain strength until
 That blazing goal of truth be won!

Vast, wide-stretched land! Though years are long,
 When Love's great ends are served in us,
 We shall be clean as well as strong,
 Kind as we are victorious!

No longer lies at Bethlehem's inn
 Lord Jesus in the manged hay,
 Where selfish wealth repents its sin
 The poor man's Christ is born to-day!



“Come ye lofty, come ye lowly”

ANONYMOUS. (*From an ancient Carol.*)

COME ye lofty, come ye lowly,
 Let your songs of gladness ring;
 In a stable lies the Holy,
 In a manger rests a King:
 See in Mary's arms reposing,
 Christ by highest Heaven adored;
 Come, your circle round Him closing,
 Pious hearts that love the Lord.

Come ye poor, no pomp of station
 Robes the Child your hearts adore ;
 He, the Lord of all salvation,
 Shares your want, is weak and poor :
 Oxen, round about behold them ;
 Rafters naked, cold, and bare,
 See the shepherds ; God has told them
 That the Prince of Life lies there.

Come ye children, blithe and merry,
 This one Child your model make ;
 Christmas holly, leaf, and berry
 All be prized for his dear sake ;
 Come, ye gentle hearts and tender,
 Come ye spirits, keen and bold ;
 All in all your homage render,
 Weak and mighty, young and old.

.

Hark ! the Heaven of heavens is ringing,
 Christ the Lord to man is born !
 Are not all our hearts too singing,
 "Welcome, welcome, Christmas morn" ?
 Still the Child, all power possessing,
 Smiles as through the ages past ;
 And the song of Christmas blessing,
 Sweetly sings to rest at last.



The Virgin-Mother

ANONYMOUS. From *CHRISTMAS CAROLS, ANCIENT AND MODERN*, Edited by WILLIAM SANDYS (1833).

COME, behold the Virgin-Mother
Fondly beaming on her Child;
Nature shows not such another,
Glorious, holy, meek, and mild:

Bethlehem's ancient walls enclose Him,
Dwelling-place of David once;
Now no friendly homestead knows Him,
Though the noblest of his Sons.

Many a prophecy before Him
Published his bright advent long,
Guardian angels low adore Him
In a joyous heavenly song:

Eastern sages see with wonder
His bright star illumine the sky,
Over volumes old they ponder,
Volumes of dark prophecy.

Royal Bethlehem, how deserted,
All his pomp and splendour lost;
Is a stable, poor and dirty,
All the welcome you can boast?

Far they travel, oft inquiring
Where the wondrous Babe is born;
On they come with great desiring,
Although others treat with scorn.

See a Babe of days and weakness
Heaven's Almighty now appears,
Liable to death and sickness,
Shame and agony and tears

Saviour He, and great Creator,
He who formed the heaven and earth,
Yet takes on Him human nature,
Angels wonder at his birth.

Why, ah, why this condescension,
God with mortal man to dwell?
Why lay by His grand pretension,
He who doth all thrones excell?

'Tis to be a man, a brother,
With us sinners of mankind;
Vain we search for such another,
Ne'er we love like this shall find.

.

Though an infant now you view Him,
He shall fill His Father's throne,
Gather all the nations to Him,
Every knee shall then bow down.

Friends! Oh then in cheerful voices
They shall shout with glad acclaim,
While each rising saint rejoices,
Saints of high or lowest fame.

May we now, that day forestalling,
Hear the word, and read, and pray,
Listen to the gospel calling,
And with humble heart obey.



“A Child this day is born”

ANONYMOUS. From *CHRISTMAS CAROLS, ANCIENT AND MODERN*, Edited by WILLIAM SANDYS (1833).

A CHILD this day is born,
 A Child of high renown,
 Most worthy of a sceptre,
 A sceptre and a crown.
 Noëls, noëls, noëls,
 Noëls sing all we may,
 Because the King of kings
 Was born this blessed day.

This Child both God and Man
 From Heaven down to us came,
 He is the King of all kings,
 And Jesus is his name.
 Noëls, &c.

Then tidings shepherds heard
 In field watching their fold,
 Was by an angel unto them
 That night revealed and told.
 Noëls, &c.

“For lo, I bring you tidings
 Of gladness and of mirth,
 Which cometh to all people by
 This holy Infant’s birth.”
 Noëls, &c.

Then was there with the angel
 An host incontinent
 Of heavenly bright soldiers,
 Down from the Highest sent.
 Noëls, &c.

The Poets on Christmas

Lauding the Lord our God,
 And his celestial King,
 All glory be in Paradise.
 This heavenly host did sing.
 Noëls, &c.

Glory be unto our God,
 That sitteth still on high,
 With praises and with triumphs great,
 And joyful melody.
 Noëls, &c.



Mary, the mother of Jesus

TAYLER, CHARLES B. (1797-1875).

MOTHER of that mysterious mortal birth,
 By which the Eternal Son, as man, was born,
 Taking a lowly place on this sad earth,
 To bear its pain and sorrow, shame and scorn—
 Virgin and Mother mild
 Of that most holy Child,
 Thou, of all womankind most blessèd, most forlorn!
 Who could portray thy feelings deep and calm,
 When that fair Babe lay cradled on thy breast;
 His cherub form encircled by thine arm,
 His soft cheek to thy tender bosom prest?
 Ah! who could read thy mind,
 Its musings undefined,
 Its memories sadly sweet, its joys supremely blest?
 Was there no cloud to dim the prospect bright,
 That opened on thy Child's advancing years?
 No thought of coming grief thy hopes to blight,
 No speechless agonies, and heart-wrung tears?
 No vision of the sword,
 From aged Simeon's word,
 To thrill thy loving heart with dark foreboding fears?

Or did each dim and gathering shade arise,
Mist-like, to melt before the morning ray?
Did the clear light of that sweet Infant's eyes
Chase every dark and dismal thought away?
And childhood's joyous spring
Its bloom and brightness bring
To banish from thine heart the distant wintry day?
Didst thou forget the terrors of that night,
When, stealing forth a little trembling band,
To Egypt's sultry plains ye took your flight,
Across the desert's drear and scorching sand?
Till there your wearied feet
Had found a safe retreat,
Far from the rage of Herod's murderous band.
Oh! did no thought of Bethlehem's piteous scene,
The infant's cry, the mother's frantic shriek,
Cloud the calm beauty of thy brow serene,
And blanch the roses of thy fair young cheek?
Didst thou not closer press
Thy Child, with fond caress,
And love intense towards One so holy, yet so weak?
Or did experience of God's truth awaken
Calmness and strength within thy thoughtful mind,
Bracing thy spirit meek to faith unshaken,
To perfect confidence and will resigned,
Till every danger past,
To Nazareth at last
Brought by thy heavenly Guide a quiet home to find?
Still from that innocent and wondrous Child,
'Twas thine to learn faith's lesson high and holy,
Whenever He looked up, and gently smiled
In thy sweet face, his Mother pure and lowly;
While his untroubled sleep
Taught thee thine heart to keep,
Unmoved by earthly joy, or downcast melancholy.

.

The Christmas Tree at "The Pines"

WATTS-DUNTON, THEODORE (1836-).

LIFE still hath one romance that naught can bury,
 Not Time himself, who coffins Life's romances ;
 For still will Christmas gild the year's mischances.
 If childhood comes—as here—to make him merry,
 To kiss with lips more ruddy than the cherry,
 To smile with eyes outshining by their glances
 The Christmas tree, to dance with fairy dances
 And crown his hoary brow with leaf and berry.

And as to us, dear friend, the carols sung
 Are fresh as ever. Bright as yonder bough
 Of mistletoe as that which shone and swung
 When you and I and Friendship made a vow
 That childhood's Christmas still should seal each
 brow—
 Friendship's, and yours, and mine—and keep us
 young.



A Christmas Song

WILSON, LISA (-).

ON Christmas eve I could not rest,
 For all the bells were ringing ;
 And through the streets the children went,
 And I could hear them singing.

A year ago I had been glad ;
 But now—much pain and sadness
 Had darkened all my life, and I
 Could feel no Christmas gladness.

The calm moon and majestic stars
Shone on me lonely lying ;
And through the glittering sky, methought
I saw an angel flying.

Who came and sat beside my bed
Where I lay worn with weeping ;
He showed me such a wondrous sight
As held mine eyes from sleeping.

I saw the gates of Paradise,
They opened wide before me ;
I saw the mystic-fruited tree,
Its laden boughs hung o'er me.

I walked upon the golden strand
Beside the crystal river ;
I heard the wondrous song of songs
That riseth up for ever.

And in the garden fair I saw
Bright bands of children playing ;
So close to me they came that I
Could hear what they were saying.

" 'Tis Christmas here in Heaven," they said,
" And we fresh crowns are weaving ;
We sing our carols in delight,
But you, why are you grieving ?

" We cannot think why you should weep
With Christmas up in Heaven ;
Is it not Christmas too on earth,
With Christmas snow new-shriven ?

" The bells in Heaven and bells on earth
Are all together ringing ;
And you must join your hands with ours,
Sing with us in our singing."

The Poets on Christmas

And so I caught their hands, and sang
With them their Christmas carol ;
And fairer grew those childish forms,
More dazzling their apparel ;

Until I could not bear the light
That all through Heaven was streaming ;
I pressed my hands upon my eyes,
And—oh ! had I been dreaming ?

The sunshine flooded all my room,
A robin gay was singing,
My sister's little laughing child
Close round my neck was clinging.

The long dark night had passed away,
The Christmas bells were pealing ;
And all my heart was filled with peace,
God's Christmas-gift of healing.



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